


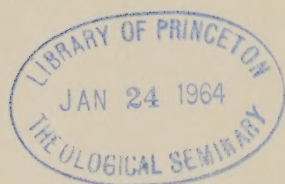
# APPROACHES TO HISTORY

PARDON E. TILLINGHAST

*Selections in the Philosophy of  
History from the Greeks to Hegel.*



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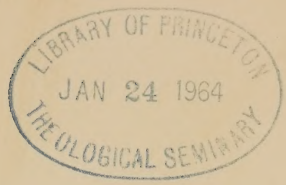
# ***Approaches to History***

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from the Greeks to Hegel***

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from the Greeks to Hegel*

Selected and Introduced

by

**Pardon E. Tillinghast**

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To the Students in the  
Middlebury Philosophy of History Seminar  
over the years



## Preface

This book was designed for use by people who are interested in the philosophy of history. The main purpose has been to show why an author, or authors, faced with a certain set of problems at a given time in history, have attempted to solve the pattern of the human past. The introductions are more extensive than usual in order to place the selections in their proper perspective.

I would like to thank the following publishers for permission to quote from material published by them:

The Beacon Press and J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.: Toynbee, A. J., *Greek Historical Thought from Homer to the Age of Heraclius*, New American Library, 3rd Printing, 1953.

Oxford University Press, Inc.: McKeon, R., *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, Random House, Inc., New York, 1941.

Viking Press and Chatto & Windus, Ltd.: Finley, M. I., *The Greek Historians*, New York, 1959.

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Columbia University Press: Bodin, Jean, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, translated by Beatrice Reynolds, New York, 1945.

Cornell University Press: Bergin, T. G., and M. H. Fisch, *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, Ithaca, New York, 1948.

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## *Introduction*

This book is not intended either to show why history happened that way or that civilization is at the crossroads. It has a more modest purpose: to show how some thinkers, most of whom were not historians, tried to make the past meaningful to their own present. None of these thinkers was primarily concerned with how history ought to be written: but they were all trying, in one way or another, to explain how it was to be interpreted. Most of the speculation in this field today is by philosophers, whose business it is to analyze abstract concepts within some particular framework of meaning. Historians, on the other hand, usually assess concrete evidence relating to a particular series of past events. The authors in these readings fall into neither category, although they have something in common with both: most of them have related large groups of historical events to an abstraction, sometimes philosophical and sometimes theological, in order to demonstrate a kind of inner coherence in the past as a whole that neither historians nor philosophers today would ordinarily attempt. (Toynbee is a notable exception.) Since I am a historian, not a philosopher or theologian, I have tried, both in the choice of readings and in the prefaces, not so much to offer a critique of the standard of truth these writers used but to suggest why an author writing within his particular cultural and intellectual framework would have seen patterns in that way.

Philosophy of history can be defined as the attempt to relate the whole human past, or even any considerable part of it, to a

given set of ideas. A view of the American Civil War, for instance, is not usually overtly philosophical: a historian working with such a limited series of events can confine himself to analyzing the evidence within the framework of what is considered important in his society. In our society the meaningful framework is ordinarily a combination of political, social, and economic history, with occasional excursions into the history of ideas. Most historians do not consider the abstract implications of this context to be a problem for their work, and most philosophers until quite recently did not consider the problem important enough to justify their efforts. This book will attempt to suggest, among other things, that the framework of meaning is at least as important as the facts used in determining what these facts will show.

It should be clear, then, that ordinary historiography implicitly, and philosophy of history explicitly, always involves a relationship. On one side of the relationship is always a series of facts; what changes is what is on the other side. The problem of what "history" means can thus be divided into three kinds of questions:

1. *What is the meaning of history when it is conceived as a series of past events?* In this case the series of events is considered as having a kind of reality of its own, and the relationship is thus one to another objective reality with reference to which the events are ordered. The assumption of people who state the problem this way is almost always that history really *does* show something, and the usual name for this kind of history is "speculative" or "metaphysical."

2. *What does the word "history" mean?* What sort of activity is historical thinking? This changes the meaning of "meaning," and is the semantic approach preferred at present among philosophers of history; it is usually called "analytical" or "critical." The relationship is now not one between an observer and historical data at all, but between a critic and concepts (which are also facts). But it does not answer the problem of why history is worth studying. Where metaphysicians are invariably to some extent system-builders, critics are usually system-destroyers.

3. *What is the meaning of history when it is conceived as an ordering of past events that takes place in our minds here and*

now? This problem combines aspects of the other two. It makes "meaning" not an objective but a subjective idea, and it puts the historian himself at the central point that God or Reason had formerly occupied.

The authors of the selections overwhelmingly preferred the first of these three approaches, although traces of the other two can be seen. They organized facts a little differently than we do, but a number of problems which we can recognize keep appearing. The sum of these problems by no means exhausts the various meanings of "philosophy of history," which no one has ever defined to the satisfaction of more than half a dozen others. The problems are more or less constant: what changes is the context in which a temporary solution is possible. The problems always appear, like historiography itself, as relationships between two entities. They can be summarized as follows:

1. *The relationship between history and cosmic purpose.* The aspirant to historical studies invariably undertakes them with some purpose in mind. Until quite recently this was not simply to show that facts of the same kind were related to each other, but to show a relationship between all of them on one hand, and some kind of ultimate purpose on the other. This purpose was ordinarily called God or Fate or Reason; but in any case the historian attempted to justify historical study in terms of an objective entity according to which the facts could be fitted into some sort of pattern. If there was no objective pattern of any kind immanent in past events, a justification for studying them was not easy to find.

2. *The relationship between repetition and uniqueness in historical events.* While it was apparent to most people that situations never repeated each other exactly, there seemed to be a correlation between certain kinds of events, for example, the abuse of power and the more or less rough replacement of the abusers. Several schemes were devised to explain these correlations, of which Divine Judgment was the earliest, and some kind of cycle the most usual. A cycle involved birth, growth, and decay, a natural process which, since it obviously applied to humans, might also apply to their social structures. It was occasionally

suggested (as by Plato and the Stoics) that repetition was absolute, in a huge circle over forgotten eons of time, but this was a matter of metaphysics, not of historical evidence. As the cycle stressed the repetitive aspect, so a line of some kind stressed the uniqueness. A spiral offered a pleasing combination of the two ideas. No metaphysical interpretation of history has been able to avoid using some form of a cycle or line.

3. *The relationship between historical movement and a goal.* Purposive movement must have some goal in terms of which it moves. This means it is generally linear: the line often needs a beginning and always seems to need an end, unless the goal is in the movement itself. The earliest theories had no goal because they put the high point in the beginning: history, starting with the gods, obviously moved downward from a past Golden Age. Later the Golden Age was put at the end, but this changed the whole structure. If history is going somewhere, the final goal (which is in the future) has to be known; otherwise progress toward it cannot be determined. But it can only be known by faith of some kind, and this is why all historical systems that postulate progress are also interpenetrated by faith in an order of events that is at least partly independent of the events that purport to show it. This happened, for instance, when the Christian scheme was secularized and God's will as the basic force gave way to a more impersonal Providence. Direct intervention was now no longer needed, except at the beginning; but faith *was* still needed. Providence after a while shaded off into Progress, whose classic 18th-century form was an attempt to show movement toward a goal in nontheological terms. By the 19th century, Process came into favor: Process has no goal at all, although it avoids some of the metaphysical assumptions of its predecessors. But as soon as history becomes goalless, the problem of why it is worth studying appears all over again. This may be one reason why critical philosophy of history arose at about the same time as the process-theory. But this stage of thought occurred after Hegel's time.

4. *The relationship between freedom and law.* This is an invariable ingredient in metaphysical philosophies of history. Any system at all posits a certain regularity in events: if there is no



regularity, there is no point in classifying them. Since human action appears to consist of a mixture of motives, part of which are free and part determined, the framework must not fit too tightly, and individual action in the theory is restricted exactly in proportion to the tightness of the laws the system posits. In a system with a high predictive value, which historical systems never seem to have, the individual's choices are very limited. The usual solution given by the authors included is to define freedom as participation by the individual in the system which makes history as a whole meaningful: true freedom consists not in erratic and self-centered behavior, which is a lower kind, but in enthusiastic obedience to—and therefore participation in—law, which is defined as much higher. The freest individual is the one who does most to further the system the author has in mind.

5. *The relationship between history and other fields.* Since any question of purpose is not a historical but a metaphysical matter, all historical systems rely on some other discipline for their meaning. Theology, philosophy, and science have all been frequent contestants as the context within which history should fit. Ordinarily a sharp line can only be drawn between history and one discipline by pulling it even closer to another, as, for example, Hegel pulled history away from nature by making it a branch of philosophy, and St. Augustine pulled it away from philosophy by making it a branch of natural theology. The one thing almost all philosophers of history agree on, and with good reason, is that history is not an autonomous discipline: in other words, it is always studied for some reason outside itself.

6. *The relationship between inner and outer meaning.* Individual historical facts have no meaning at all. Their meaning comes from two things: the "causal" sequence of events which selected chains of facts purport to demonstrate, and an ultimate purpose in things which these sequences are supposed to show. These can be called outer and inner meaning. For instance, facts grouped in one way might show conclusively that the French Revolution was brought about by economic distress. Another equally important group of them might be a clear demonstration that political imbalance was really what caused the trouble; a

third could well prove that there was no discernible cause whatever. All these "causes" correspond to the outer meaning of the facts. The inner meaning is teleological: the advance of Liberty, the Divine government of the world, or social progress in general. Both inner and outer meaning are metaphysical, and both depend partly on the observer for their meaning. The partiality of the observer who collected the facts—and thus showed their meaning—was very seldom seen as a problem by the men who wrote the selections following.

7. *The relationship between a historian and his material.* In order to discover either inner or outer meaning in his material, a historian has to use a framework of ideas: historical thought is simply one aspect of thought in general, and any pattern in events is basically a mental one. Whether this subjective mental pattern corresponds to another, absolute one is a question few contemporary philosophers would care to answer, but the authors of the selections were usually convinced not only that such an absolute pattern existed, and that it was discoverable, but that they had discovered it. Thus the more recent problem of the relation between mental patterns and actual ones did not ordinarily arise in historical thought: the correspondence was between recorded events and the ideal to which, if they were understood properly, they ought to conform. Any lack of correspondence was bridged over either by the assumption that not enough was known as yet, but that future research would reveal it, or (more usually) by faith in ultimate purpose. The historian was considered to be much less a creative agent than he is today; he was rather the obedient (and therefore fairly impartial) servant of the force that had ordered the events themselves. His knowledge, then, was valid or not depending more on his relation to his absolute than to the facts. In some cases he regarded historical study as participation in reason, or in everyday experience; in others, participation in faith, which is a different kind of experience. None of these is more intrinsically meaningful than the others, and all have frequently been used. In any case, a non-historical context gave the facts the inner meaning which made them significant.



Historical writing has been confused as much as it has been enlightened by the way some of these points have been introduced. If there is progress in history, for example, can there be said to be progress in theories about history too? This is more than doubtful: Hegel is not a better philosopher of history than St. Augustine because he came later, although he can be judged to have been better than some of his contemporaries. This is true even though Hegel could use techniques that St. Augustine could not. It does not mean Hegel and Augustine cannot be compared, but it does mean that it is more sensible to compare writer's performance to that of other writers who lived in his society, and were therefore capable of doing about the same thing, than to say one was a better or worse historical thinker than someone much earlier or later, and who therefore could *not* do the same sort of thing, however much the two men may have said their purpose was identical.

On what basis can we judge this performance? Hardly either on method, which is usually anything but tight and accurate, or on style, which is ordinarily diffuse and murky, rich in unproven (to us) assumptions and circular arguments. These points are connected because a metaphysical philosopher of history is by definition trying to do something new and unusual: to put a long sequence of events into a context that is meaningful from his own point of view. For this there has existed, since classical times, neither an accepted literary vocabulary nor a quantitative and scientific one. None of the works included since then would qualify as either a literary or scientific masterpiece. This means that another standard has to be used, if the writers are worth our reading. Originality, idea-content, fertility of hypotheses might be the best, for it is one characteristic almost all of them have in very large measure.

To a modern student, a great many of the ideas in the selections will appear as either rather absurd or as clichés. This is unfortunate, but it is the fate of most ideas more than a few decades old. The reason is not that one set is false and the other true, but that our frame of reference has enabled us to accept some and embody them in our own thought, and to discard others. In

another century the tables may well be turned again, and the realization of this is one benefit of studying theories that at first sight appear to be so passé.

The period covered is from very roughly 1100 B.C. to exactly A.D. 1823. There is no problem about the earlier date for a starting-point; the end does pose some problems. It was chosen because after Hegel a group of new attitudes became dominant in historiography, notably positivism and the Rankian brand of historicism: both stressed the scientific side of history, although they meant different things by it. This increased the already prevailing tendency to study history as process, without reference to any intrinsic meaning. Part of the reason was an intense secularization of the intellectuals (as opposed to the pseudo-secularization of the 18th century) which led them to discard metaphysical explanations in history as in any other subject. Ultimate purpose was all very well in its way, but its way was not that of scientific history. And as historical technique was refined, the canons of what was and was not admissible as historical evidence became more and more rigorous. Earlier historians could take the whole of world civilization for their province; the generation of Ranke could not.

Within these broad time-limits, no attempt has been made to cover all the significant philosophers of history: among the omissions are Joachim of Flore, Otto of Freising, Machiavelli, Bossuet, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Fichte, and Schlegel. The men included were put there because each one, or group, represented some particular outlook, or series of outlooks, toward historical meaning. No clear line is apparent in their writing from the Greeks to Hegel, except that each reflects a somewhat different cultural context, and that they all believed that past events demonstrated some sort of ultimate purpose.

The introductions are not intended so much to serve as *explications de texte* as to introduce the reader to the total context within which the selections were written. If a pattern emerges, it will be from the reader's mind more than from the material itself; but then that is where historical patterns have always come from in any case.

## *The Greeks*

While the Greeks were by no means the first people to write history, they invented the word (*historia*, investigation) and *were* the first to apply it to an account of past events. Although generalizations about the whole of Greek thought from 900 B.C. to 600 A.D. are unusually hazardous, two points can be made: 1. Greeks stressed the ideal of the man who does everything well, and every one of the best historical writers had at least one other career. Most of them also had a normal interest in drama, poetry, rhetoric and often other fields as well. Nor were Greek patterns in the past always by historians: several of the selections were not intended as history at all. Thus Greek philosophy of history cannot be studied by itself: it is involved in every other aspect of their thought. 2. Until Hellenistic times Greek life was bound up in the polis, and Greek writers carried its values into historical writing. The polis was not only a political unit, but a cultural and moral one as well: politics was the everyday concern of educated men. This is why almost all Greek historical writing is political. Further, it always had a cultural or a moral

flavor: it was either intended to offer esthetic satisfaction as an art, or to offer an analysis of past mistakes with the intention of preventing their recurrence as far as possible.

The early Hellenes did not think of history as separate from poetry, myth, and drama. Homer's epics, which combine all these elements, remained for some centuries the normal standard for other writers to elaborate, and even to add to. For example, Hesiod, a Boeotian, shows both epic and historical characteristics. The sequence of metallic ages in his *Works and Days*, declining from gold to iron, is a very ancient legend, perhaps with an archaeological basis, and is found in other cultures; but Hesiod inserts a fifth age of heroes. It has no particular connection with the other four; this age of heroes is his attempt to combine legend with the actual events of the Trojan War.

The change from epic and partly-epic poetry to prose narrative took place in Ionia, among the seventh-century *logographoi*. While almost nothing remains of their work, Herodotus, an Ionian who moved to Athens, benefited greatly by it and even incorporated sections into his *History of the Persian Wars*. Herodotus is less the Father of History than a developer of the logographers' methods. He continued the separation of history from poetry and myth, not using an ordinary narrative (this would not have been history) but a dramatized and artistic one, dealing with a particular set of relationships in the immediate past between Greek and non-Greek (barbarian) peoples. His own statement of purpose shows the connection with epic poetry and drama: he writes "with the two-fold object of saving the past of mankind from oblivion and ensuring that the extraordinary achievements of the Hellenic and Oriental worlds shall enjoy their just renown." To do this properly involved a great deal of research, which Herodotus carried out himself. Thus his definition of "history" would include geography, natural history and comparative religion. But the book has the elements of a tragedy, whose characters are dogged by Nemesis and succumb to a fate they cannot avoid. Herodotus must have known Aeschylus' *The Persians*, which presents the classic triad of *koros-hybris-até*: satiety, insolence, blindness. This triad appears more than once in



his *History*. Another dramatic device is *peripeteia*, violent alternation, in which an individual or an empire (that of Croesus, for instance) was raised or humbled in accord with a decree of the gods. Although Herodotus was a historian, not a playwright, his book has almost as much in common with his poetic and dramatic predecessors as with his immediate successor, Thucydides.

As a citizen of Periclean Athens, Thucydides could hardly write history without reference to the contemporary ferment of ideas there, even though his references to ideas are usually indirect. We know little about him, save that he was a general in involuntary retirement, but his writing shows he was cultivated, skeptical and austere. He appears also to have been conservative, in spite of which he undertook a new departure in historical writing: his *History of the Peloponnesian War* was limited to a severely factual account of a particular series of events he either had been able to witness himself or had questioned other eyewitnesses about. This lost his work the wide sweep of Herodotus; but it gained it a new kind of accuracy, based less on artistic feeling than on analysis according to the principles of philosophy. What does this accuracy mean, and why did he pursue it so relentlessly, insisting on truth rather than poetic or dramatic canons as the basis of proper historical writing?

Thucydides believed it was essential to gain a true perspective of the Peloponnesian War, the greatest, and saddest, event in Athenian history up to his time. By "true" he means "corresponding to the observed facts of everyday experience," and excluding other kinds of facts, such as gods, fates, and portents. This implies, although he does not say so, that divine interventions are not according to fact, and that true history is an analytical account of purely human events. Stripped of irrelevant though touching stories, it will lead to a more accurate understanding by Athenians of the causes of the recent disasters, and possibly to the prevention of events of the same kind in the future. His intention is not to waste his readers' time by writing "an essay to win the applause of the moment," presumably a reference to the Sophists, but to produce something permanent: a "possession for all time."

What is important here is his belief that the motives that had led to the war were permanent human ones: thus in a story of transitory events, if accurately reported, lasting entities can be found. The Nemesis in Thucydides comes not from divine decree but from eternal flaws in human character, and it has been suggested that his generals and statesmen seem in a way to be almost personifications of general laws. It is possible, although it cannot be proved, that Socratic or sophist thinking, with its stress on the permanent rather than the transitory in human affairs, may have affected Thucydides in this way. At any rate, he was conscious enough that he was attempting something new so that he put down his reasons for writing this kind of history at greater length than any of his predecessors.

The Athenians never again produced a first-class historian. The reasons are not clear: perhaps the ablest thinkers wondered not only whether a really accurate account of the past could be constructed, but also whether it would add anything important to human knowledge if it could. This decline perhaps may be related to the atrophy of tragic drama, but it is even more likely to be connected with the rise of Platonic philosophy.

Plato began his formal teaching some twenty years after Thucydides' death. The key to his theory of ideas is the very old Greek belief that individual things and particular events have, by themselves, no significance at all. The road to truth lies through abstractions and generalizations, leading upward to the supreme entities of The True, The Good, The Beautiful. To which of these did History correspond? Plato, significantly, has almost nothing to say about historiography. But in his thought the circle is the most perfect of all geometrical forms, since it revolves forever around a fixed point; circular change partakes of infinity. If history is to have any reality, it would seem it must be as a cycle, a recurrence of events, corresponding to the endless growth and decay of nature. In this way human history not only would become part of natural history, but by studying individual facts would be given a point it would not otherwise have. A form of this theory appears in the legend of the great wheel of life in *The Statesman*. The legend's intention is not to explain history,



but to illustrate one aspect of the relationship between divine and human action. The first half of the cycle (36,000 years) is a Golden Age; the second half, one of decay. There is a certain analogy to the Garden of Eden in this idea of man confused and fallen when he tries to find his own way. But the Golden Age is recoverable, unlike that of Hesiod. The trouble is that the legend, which can be used to explain either the past or the future, is at the opposite extreme from Thucydides. Plato's "explanation" has no references to investigation, politics or everyday experience at all.

Aristotle also avoided writing history, except constitutional history, but in his analysis of thought he classifies historiography in relation to poetry and, by implication, to politics. The first selection, from the *Poetics*, illustrates the Greek preoccupation with history as an art form: it is similar to poetry yet clearly inferior to it, because a historian is limited by having to deal with events, not as they should have happened according to either logical or artistic rules, but as they did happen. The other selection, from the *Politics*, gives the classic definition of the four "polities," of which traces can be seen in Herodotus and more than traces in Plato's *Republic*, and which became standard in later political thought. Ordinarily Greek historical patterns took only two forms: decline and the cycle. Aristotle's polities implicitly combine both ideas. Typically, his abstractions are based on observed data rather than on an exalted flight of the imagination.

The Hellenistic era changed the substance of Greek thought, although it retained its forms in a new framework of meaning. As the city-states declined and communication improved, self-contained Athenian pride gave way to the eclecticism of a Mediterranean community prepared to discuss any idea, but not sure any of them could really be true. As creativity lessened, resignation to a world-order that appeared impossible to change increased. As the Near East became Hellenized, the Greeks became Orientalized. Amid a welter of philosophies, cults and mystery-religions, historiography atrophied, and only three of the great sects gave any thought to history. None of them gave very much, perhaps because they all stressed the necessity for imperturba-

bility, or even indifference, as the proper attitude of civilized men towards human affairs: an attitude any of the great Athenians would have found repulsive. Either philosophy or art gave a deeper interpretation of reality than study of the past could possibly do. The Pythagoreans occasionally used the cycle theory, each turn of the wheel being separated from its predecessors by a universal conflagration (*ekpyrosis*) which obliterated human memory, and was followed by a rebirth (*palingenesis*) in which the course of events repeated itself, even to the smallest details. This was elaborated by the Stoics, who developed the doctrine of the Great Year, in which all things periodically return to their beginnings. The Epicureans, for example Lucretius, held on the contrary that the earliest men had been like beasts and that only their intelligence had raised them into men. But none of this was based on historical research; the idea of progress was not a part of Greek historical thought, partly because progress demands a goal to look forward to. This meant that investigation of the past had to take either an artistic or utilitarian view; no other approach, granted Greek presuppositions, was possible. But both approaches seemed to have dried up.

It appears that great historians were only produced by great events. Herodotus and Thucydides were able to become the recorders of extraordinary happenings in their immediate past. The greatest event of the Hellenistic period was the sudden unification of most of the known world, under Macedon and then Rome. The immediate reflection of this in historiography was the rise of universal, "ecumenical" history (*oikumené*, drawn together). It began in the fourth century with the decline of the polis and the rise of the rhetorical Isocratean school, but its greatest example is Polybius, the chronicler of the rise of Rome and by all odds the most significant historian between Thucydides and Tacitus. Polybius, an Arcadian, who came to Rome as a hostage and remained to write Roman history, belonged to no particular school of thought, but he combines elements of Thucydides and Aristotle. He is like Thucydides in his hard common sense, lack of artistry, and conviction that a true history is basically an analytical and didactic narrative of political events, to be

studied as a background for understanding one's own age. His problem was to account, as factually as he could, for something new—the *oikumené*—and more particularly for Roman success in bringing it off. This necessitated new departures in historical thinking, of which two stand out. The first is his insistence that history must be universal, not monographic, which involved a change in technique from personal interviews to reliance on documents. The second is his use of two old concepts, which he uses more fully than his predecessors: *Tyche* and *Anacyclosis*.

*Tyche* seems to mean (although not all commentators agree) not, as in Thucydides, chance or coincidence, but Destiny or Fortune. Polybius' point is not that the Romans were an inert people used by Fortune, but that Fortune happened to be on their side. Although it is not worked out conceptually at all, it appears that the area within which humans can determine their own destinies has become much more sharply limited than in Thucydides. *Anacyclosis* means the return of events in a circle, but less in the Stoic sense than the Aristotelian. If events—such as Aristotle's four polities—keep recurring, the study of history has very practical value; but at the same time the historical process as a whole has no meaning, since it goes nowhere. To give it meaning, Polybius excepted Rome from the otherwise universal law of decay, until, late in his writing, his friend Scipio Aemilianus was murdered and he changed his mind. His final feeling seems to be that even if history as a whole is a meaningless tragedy, the wise man will seek virtue by learning from it what lessons he can.

Although Polybius towers over his contemporaries, he does represent some Hellenistic trends, such as a loss of confidence in human attempts to build a better society, coupled with the suggestion that readers of history, by superior knowledge of pitfalls in the past, may at least *as individuals* avoid some of those ahead. Later historical writing carried this theme further, but in a duller way. As Greek culture spread it lost contact not only with the polis but with the wholeness of Greek life, and the audience split into a mass-public and groups of specialists. More and more the historians tended to become precious or antiquarian. They re-

discovered a love of poetry: history, having lost its connection with philosophy and the search for underlying truth, became an art once more. In an age of abridgments and condensations, Diodorus Siculus, a universal historian from Sicily and an expert with scissors and paste, paraphrased the work of better men. The old unsolved problems were ignored and the old didacticism reasserted itself: history, the guardian of tradition, was to be studied in order to avoid past mistakes, encourage heroes and deter villains.

No Roman writer, not even Livy or Tacitus, had anything important to contribute to historical theory. The historical tradition survived best in the eastern half of the empire, where Justinian's reign in the sixth century gave it a new lease on life. But the Byzantines copied the Hellenes slavishly: they were all too conscious of being continuators of a Great Tradition. Thus the tradition lost most of its meaning because even contemporary events were described in a stilted, pseudo-Attic style. Agathias, a subject of Justinian and a lawyer and poet as well as a historian, was at least as deeply attached to poetry as to history and indeed thought they were much the same. But if history is really a form of poetry and its chief desideratum is artistic presentation, it does not necessarily involve accurate analysis or close reasoning applied to events at all, even though Agathias, in the proper classical manner, insists that truth is his first consideration. Although he was subtle and learned, his history-as-poetry, while in a way it returned to the beginnings of Greek historical thought, did so on an imitative level. Something disappeared from Greek historical writing, and never returned.

The following selections are not intended to present Highlights of Classical Historical Thought: some of the best historians are not included, and some of the best inclusions are not by historians. They are an attempt to show how some ancient thinkers, all of whom wrote in Greek, tried to answer one particular type question. The question was not "How should history be written?" which each generation solved, more or less. The problem they did not solve was, "What is the *point* of studying history? What ob-



served, deduced or imagined regularities does it yield? To what ultimate, unchanging truth does the flux of human events correspond? Is history a useful subject, like ethics and politics, or an esthetic one, like art and poetry? According to what principles does history have meaning?" The trouble is that no classical thinker ever wrote a treatise on such a subject. Thus occasional paragraphs from authors who ask these questions have had to be lifted from the body of their work, particularly from the prefaces. These prefaces often have a portentous look, as if written for posterity, which they usually were. The narratives themselves have had to be excluded, which gives the selections a choppy character. But while this method leaves much to be desired, it shows the development of abstract historical concepts better than a fuller presentation of any historian, or group of historians, could have done.

## READINGS

### *Hesiod* (9th or 8th century B.C.)<sup>1</sup>

In the beginning, a golden race of mortal men was made by the immortal dwellers on Olympus. These men lived in the days of Cronus, when he was king in Heaven. They lived like Gods with hearts free from care, without part or lot in labor and sorrow. Pitiful old age did not await them, but ever the same in strength of hand and foot, they took their pleasure in feasting, apart from all evils. When they died, it was as though they were overcome by sleep. All good things were theirs, and the grain harvest was yielded by bountiful Earth of her own accord—abundantly, ungrudgingly—while they, in peace and good will, lived upon their lands with good things in abundance. Now after this race had been hidden by Earth, they became good

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<sup>1</sup> Arnold J. Toynbee, "Works and Days," *Greek Historical Thought* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1953), pp. 126-28. Reprinted by permission of The Beacon Press and J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.

spirits by the will of great Zeus—spirits above the ground, guardians of mortal men, givers of wealth (for they have gotten even that prerogative of kings).

Again, a second race far worse, a Race of Silver, was made thereafter by the dwellers on Olympus—a race not like unto the Golden either in body or in mind. For a hundred years the child was nurtured at his good mother's knee, playing, a helpless infant, in his home; and when they reached their manhood and the measure of it, short was the time that they lived, and that in pain through their folly. They could not refrain from baneful outrage upon one another, and they would not serve the immortals or make sacrifice upon the holy altars of the blessed gods after the lawful manner of men in all their dwelling places. These, in the end thereof, were put away by Zeus son of Cronus in his wrath, because they would not pay their honors to the blessed gods of Olympus. Now after this race had also been hidden by Earth, they gained among mortals the name of blessed ones beneath the ground—second in glory; and yet, even so, they too are attended with honor.

And Father Zeus made yet a third race of mortal men—a Race of Bronze, in no wise like unto the Silver, fashioned from the ash-shaft, mighty and terrible. Their delight was in the grievous deeds of Ares and in the trespasses of Pride. No bread ever passed their lips, but their hearts in their breasts were strong as adamant, and none might approach them. Great was their strength and unconquerable were the arms which grew from their shoulders upon their stalwart frames. Of bronze were their arms, of bronze their houses, and with bronze they tilled the land (dark iron was not yet). These were brought low by their own hands and went their way to the mouldering house of chilly Hades, nameless. For all their mighty valor, Death took them in his dark grip, and they left the bright light of the sun.

Now when this race also had been covered by Earth, yet a fourth race was made . . . more righteous, the divine race of men heroic, who are called Demigods, the race that was aforetime upon the boundless Earth. These were destroyed by evil war and dread battle—some below seven-gate Thebes in the land of



Cadmus, as they fought for the flocks of Oedipus, while others were carried for destruction to Troy in ships over the great gulf of the sea, for the sake of fair-haired Helen. There they met their end and Death enfolded them; and then, apart from Mankind, they were granted a life and a dwelling place by Zeus son of Cronus, who made them to abide at the ends of the Earth. So there they abide, with hearts free from care, in the Isles of the Blessed beside the deep eddies of Ocean stream—happy Heroes, for whom a harvest honey-sweet, thrice ripening every year, is yielded by bountiful Earth.

O would that I had not tarried to live thereafter with the fifth race, but had either died or had been born after; for now in these latter days is the Race of Iron. Never by day shall they rest from travail and sorrow, and never by night from the hand of the spoiler; and cruel are the cares which the Gods shall give them. The father shall not be of one mind with the children nor the children with the father, nor the guest with the host that receives him, nor friend with friends, nor shall brother cleave to brother as aforetime. Parents shall swiftly age and swiftly be dishonored, and they shall reproach their children and chide them with cruel words. Wretches that know not the visitation of the Gods! Such as these would not repay their aging parents for their nurture. The righteous man or the good man or he that keeps his oath shall not find favor, but they shall honor rather the doer of wrong and the proud man insolent. Right shall rest in might of hand and Ruth shall be no more. The wicked shall do hurt to his better by use of crooked words with oath to crown them. All the sons of sorrowful man shall have strife for their helpmate—harsh-voiced Strife of hateful countenance, rejoicing in evil.

And then, at long last, shall those spirits go their way to Olympus from the wide-wayed Earth, with their beautiful faces veiled in white raiment, seeking the company of the immortals, and leaving behind them the company of men—even the spirits of Ruth and Retribution. Pain and grief are the portion that shall be left for mortal men, and there shall be no defense against the evil day.

*Thucydides* (c. 460-395 B.C.)<sup>2</sup>

## BOOK I

1. Thucydides, an Athenian, wrote the history of the war between the Peloponnesians and the Athenians, beginning at the moment that it broke out, and believing that it would be a great war, and more worthy of relation than any that had preceded it. This belief was not without its grounds. The preparations of both the combatants were in every department in the last state of perfection; and he could see the rest of the Hellenic race taking sides in the quarrel, those who delayed doing so at once having it in contemplation. Indeed this was the greatest movement yet known in history, not only of the Hellenes, but of a large part of the barbarian world—I had almost said of mankind. For though the events of remote antiquity, and even those that more immediately precede the war, could not from lapse of time be clearly ascertained, yet the evidences, which an inquiry carried as far back as was practicable leads me to trust, all point to the conclusion that there was nothing on a great scale, either in war or in other matters.

21. On the whole, the conclusions I have drawn from the proofs quoted may, I believe, safely be relied on. Assuredly they will not be disturbed either by the lays of a poet displaying the exaggeration of his craft, or by the compositions of the chroniclers that are attractive at truth's expense, the subjects they treat of being out of the reach of evidence, and time having robbed most of them of historical value by enthroning them in the region of legend. Turning from these, we can rest satisfied with having proceeded upon the clearest data, and having arrived at conclusions as exact as can be expected in matters of such antiquity. To come to this war; despite the known disposition of the actors in a struggle to overrate its importance, and when it is over to return to their admiration of earlier events, yet an examination

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<sup>2</sup> M. I. Finley, "History of the Peloponnesian War," *The Greek Historians* (New York: The Viking Press, Inc., 1959), pp. 218-19, 230-31. Copyright © 1959 by The Viking Press, Inc. and reprinted by their permission and the permission of Chatto & Windus, Ltd.

of the facts will show that it was much greater than the wars which preceded it.

22. With reference to the speeches in this history, some were delivered before the war began, others while it was going on; some I heard myself, others I got from various quarters; it was in all cases difficult to carry them word for word in one's memory, so my habit has been to make the speakers say what was in my opinion demanded of them by the various occasions, of course adhering as closely as possible to the general sense of what they really said. And with reference to the narrative events, far from permitting myself to derive it from the first source that came to hand, I did not even trust my own impressions, but it rests partly on what I saw myself, partly on what others saw for me, the accuracy of the report being always tried by the most severe and detailed tests possible. My conclusions have cost me some labour from the want of coincidence between accounts of the same occurrences by different eyewitnesses, arising sometimes from imperfect memory, sometimes from undue partiality for one side or the other. The absence of romance in my history will, I fear, detract somewhat from its interest; but if it be judged useful by those inquirers who desire an exact knowledge of the past as an aid to the interpretation of the future, which in the course of human things must resemble if it does not reflect it, I shall be content. In fine, I have written my work, not as an essay which is to win the applause of the moment, but as a possession for all time.

### **Plato** (427-348 B.C.)<sup>3</sup>

This universe is sometimes conducted on its path and guided in its orbit by God, while at other times, when the cycles of its appointed time have arrived at their term, it is released from control by God and proceeds to revolve in the opposite direction by itself (which it can do because it is a living creature, endowed with intelligence by the Being who originally constructed it). The tendency toward this reverse motion is

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<sup>3</sup> Toynbee, *The Statesman*, *op. cit.*, pp. 129-32. Reprinted by permission.

inevitably innate in the Universe . . . in virtue of the principle that perpetual self-consistency and self-identity are properties confined to the divine order of existences, to which Matter, by its nature, does not belong. That which we call the Heavens and the Universe has been endowed with many blessings by its Begetter, but these blessings do not include freedom from a material ingredient. For this reason it is impossible for the Universe to be permanently exempt from change . . .

In the earlier period, the whole circular motion itself, in the first place, was controlled and superintended by God, and the same superintendence was provided locally by the assignment of all the parts of the Universe to other controlling deities . . . God himself at that time shepherded and watched over Mankind, just as now Man, who stands out like a God from among his fellow creatures, acts as the shepherd of other races lower in the scale. When God was shepherd, there was no state and no ownership of women and children. All human beings came up into life again out of the earth, without any recollection of their previous experience. All the historical conditions of life were absent, while on the other hand they enjoyed fruits in abundance from trees and other plants, which were not the product of cultivation, but were raised spontaneously by the earth herself . . .

When the period of this dispensation had been completed and a change was due, or in other words when the entire earthborn race had been exhausted, because each soul had accomplished its tale of births and had been seeded in the Earth the number of times respectively ordained, at that point the Helmsman of the Universe abandoned control of his rudder and retired to his observation post, and the Universe was set rotating in the reverse direction by Destiny and innate Desire. Forthwith, all the local Gods who shared the authority of the great Spirit realized what was happening and successively abandoned control of those parts of the Universe which were under their immediate charge. Then the Universe, as it reversed its motion, experienced the shock of two contrary momenta, which were simultaneously beginning and coming to an end. It quaked to its depths with a terrible convul-



sion, which worked fresh havoc among every race of living creatures. Afterwards, with the lapse of time, the Universe began to emerge from this tumult and disorder, to obtain relief from the seismic storms, and to settle down into its own habitual rhythm, in which it exercised control and authority over itself and all that was therein, and followed the instructions of its creator and father to the best of its recollection.

So long as the Universe enjoyed the cooperation of the Helmsman in breeding its living creatures, it implanted in them only trifling defects with a predominance of good; and when it parts company with him, it always performs its functions best during the phase least far removed from its release. As time goes on, however, and forgetfulness invades it, the malady of its original disharmony begins to gain the upper hand, until in the final phase it breaks out openly. Then the Universe receives into its composition only a trifling element of good and so predominant an admixture of the opposite that it becomes in danger of involving itself and all things therein in a common destruction. At this point, therefore, God, who had originally set it in order, perceives the straits into which the Universe had fallen, and—anxious lest it may break up under the tempestuous blows of confusion and may flounder in the fathomless gulf where all things are incommensurable—he again assumes control of its rudder, reverses the tendencies toward sickness and dissolution which had asserted themselves in the previous period when the Universe had been left to itself, sets it in order, corrects that which was amiss, and endows the Universe with immortality and eternal youth . . .

When Mankind had been deprived of the care of the Spirit who had been our shepherd, the majority of wild beasts that were fierce by nature turned savage, while man himself became weak and defenseless. In consequence, he was harried by the wild beasts, and in this first phase he was destitute of all equipment and resource, since his spontaneous food supply had failed before he had been taught, by the stress of necessity, to provide for himself. For all these reasons, Man found himself in the direst straits, and this is the origin of those legendary Gifts of the Gods



with which we have been presented, together with the instruction and training necessary for the use of them—fire from Prometheus, the arts and crafts from Hephaestus and his consort, and seeds and plants from other benefactors. Every stone in the foundations of human life has been hewn from this quarry. The watch which had been kept over Man by the Gods had now suddenly failed, and he was forced to live by his own efforts and to keep watch over himself, exactly like the Universe as a whole, which we ever imitate and follow in the alternating phases of our life and growth.

**Aristotle** (384-322 B.C.)<sup>4</sup>

9. From what we have said it will be seen that the poet's function is to describe, not the thing that has happened, but a kind of thing that might happen, i.e. what is possible as being probable or necessary. The distinction between historian and poet is not in the one writing prose and the other verse—you might put the work of Herodotus into verse, and it would still be a species of history; it consists really in this, that the one describes the thing that has been, and the other a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do—which is the aim of poetry, though it affixes proper names to the characters; by a singular statement, one as to what, say, Alcibiades did or had done to him. In Comedy this has become clear by this time; it is only when their plot is already made up of probable incidents that they give it a basis of proper names, choosing for the purpose any names that may occur to them, instead of writing like the old iambic poets about particular persons. In

<sup>4</sup> Richard P. McKeon, ed., "The Poetics," *The Basic Works of Aristotle* (New York: Random House, 1941), pp. 1463-64, 1480. Copyright Oxford University Press, Inc., and reprinted by their permission.

Tragedy, however, they still adhere to the historic names; and for this reason: what convinces is the possible; now whereas we are not yet sure as to the possibility of that which has not happened, that which has happened is manifestly possible, else it would not have come to pass. Nevertheless even in Tragedy there are some plays with but one or two known names in them, the rest being inventions; and there are some without a single known name, e.g. Agathon's *Antheus*, in which both incidents and names are of the poet's invention; and it is no less delightful on that account. So that one must not aim at a rigid adherence to the traditional stories on which tragedies are based. It would be absurd, in fact, to do so, as even the known stories are only known to a few, though they are a delight none the less to all.

It is evident from the above that the poet must be more the poet of his stories or Plots than of his verses, inasmuch as he is a poet by virtue of the imitative element in his work, and it is actions that he imitates. And if he should come to take a subject from actual history, he is none the less a poet for that; since some historic occurrences may very well be in the probable and possible order of things; and it is in that aspect of them that he is their poet.

23. As for the poetry which merely narrates, or imitates by means of versified language [without action], it is evident that it has several points in common with Tragedy.

The construction of its stories should clearly be like that in a drama; they should be based on a single action, one that is a complete whole in itself, with a beginning, middle, and end, so as to enable the work to produce its own proper pleasure with all the organic unity of a living creature. Nor should one suppose that there is anything like them in our usual histories. A history has to deal not with one action, but with one period and all that happened in that to one or more persons, however disconnected the several events may have been. Just as two events may take place at the same time, e.g. the sea-fight off Salamis and the battle with the Carthaginians in Sicily, without converging to the same end, so too of two consecutive events one may sometimes

come after the other with no one end as their common issue. Nevertheless most of our epic poets, one may say, ignore the distinction.



As in any state the polity and the governing class are virtually the same, i.e. the polity is determined by the governing class, as the governing class is the supreme authority in a state, and as supreme power must be vested either in an individual or in a Few or in the Many, it follows that when the rule of the individual or the Few or the Many is exercised for the benefit of the community at large, the polities are normal, whereas the polities which subserve the private interest either of the individual or the Few or the masses are perversions; for either the members of the State do not deserve the name of citizens, or they ought to have a share in its advantages. The form of Monarchy in which regard is paid to the interest of the community is commonly known as Kingship, and the government of the Few, although of a number exceeding one, for the good of all, as Aristocracy, whether because the rule is in the hands of the best citizens (*aristoi*) or because they exercise it for the best interests (*ariston*) of the state and all its members; while when it is the masses who direct public affairs for the interest of the community, the government is called by the name which is common to all the polities, namely a Polity. The result in this case is such as might have been expected. For although it is possible to find an individual or a few persons of eminent virtue, it can hardly be the case that a larger number are perfectly accomplished only in military virtue, as it is the only one of which the masses are capable. The consequence is that in this polity, i.e. the Polity proper, the military class is supreme, and all who bear arms enjoy full political privileges.

As perverted forms of the polities just mentioned we have Tyranny by the side of kingship, Oligarchy of Aristocracy and Democracy of Polity. For tyranny is monarchical rule for the good of the monarch. Oligarchy the rule of a few for the good of the wealthy, and Democracy the rule of the many for the good of

the poor; none of them subserves the interest of the community at large.<sup>5</sup>

## **Polybius** (201-120 B.C.)

### BOOK I<sup>6</sup>

1. Had the praise of history been passed over by former chroniclers it would perhaps have been incumbent upon me to urge the choice and special study of histories of this sort, as knowledge of the past is the readiest means men can have of correcting their conduct. But my predecessors have not been sparing in this respect. They have all begun and ended, so to speak, by enlarging on this theme: asserting again and again that the study of history is in the truest sense an education, and a training for political life; and that the most instructive, or rather the only, method of learning to bear with dignity the vicissitudes of Fortune is to recall the catastrophes of others. It is evident, therefore, that no one need think it his duty to repeat what has been said by many, and said well. Least of all myself, for the surprising nature of the events which I have undertaken to relate is in itself sufficient to challenge and stimulate the attention of everyone, old or young, to the study of my work. Can anyone be so indifferent or idle as not to care to know by what means, and under what kind of polity, almost the whole inhabited world was conquered and brought under the single dominion of the Romans, and that too within a period of not quite fifty-three years? Or who again can be so completely absorbed in other subjects of contemplation or study as to think any of them superior in importance to the accurate understanding of an event for which the past offers no precedent?

3. . . . Had the states that were rivals for universal empire been familiarly known to us, no reference perhaps to their previous history would have been necessary to show the purpose and

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<sup>5</sup> Aristotle, "Politics," Bk. III, ch. vii, in J. E. C. Welldon, *The Politics of Aristotle Translated*. (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1897).

<sup>6</sup> Finley, *op. cit.*, pp. 442-46, 465-66. Reprinted by permission.



the forces with which they approached an undertaking of this nature and magnitude. But the fact is that the majority of the Greeks have no knowledge of the previous constitution, power, or achievements either of Rome or Carthage. I therefore concluded that it was necessary to prefix this and the next book to my *History*. I was anxious that no one, when fairly embarked upon my actual narrative, should feel at a loss, and have to ask what were the designs entertained by the Romans, or the forces and means at their disposal, that they entered upon those undertakings, which did in fact lead to their becoming masters of land and sea everywhere in our part of the world. I wished, on the contrary, that these books of mine, and the prefatory sketch which they contained, might make it clear that the resources they started with justified their original idea, and sufficiently explained their final success in grasping universal empire and dominion.

4. There is this analogy between the plan of my *History* and the marvellous spirit of the age with which I have to deal. Just as Fortune made almost all the affairs of the world incline in one direction, and forced them to converge upon one and the same point, so it is my task as a historian to put before my readers a compendious view of the ways in which Fortune accomplished her purpose. It was this peculiarity which originally challenged my attention, and determined me on undertaking this work. And combined with this was the fact that no writer of our time has undertaken a general history. Had anyone done so, my ambition in this direction would have been more diminished. But, in point of fact, I notice that by far the greater number of historians concern themselves with isolated wars and the incidents that accompany them; while as to a general and comprehensive scheme of events, their date, origin, and end, no one as far as I know has undertaken to examine it. I thought it, therefore, distinctly my duty neither to pass by myself, nor allow anyone else to pass by, without full study, a characteristic specimen of the dealings of Fortune at once brilliant and instructive in the highest degree. For fruitful as Fortune is in change, and constantly as she is producing dramas in the life of men, yet never assuredly before



this did she work such a marvel, or act such a drama, as that which we have witnessed. And of this we cannot obtain a comprehensive view from writers of mere episodes.

It would be as absurd to expect to do so as for a man to imagine that he has learned the shape of the whole world, its entire arrangement and order, because he has visited one after the other the most famous cities in it, or perhaps merely examined them in separate pictures. That would be indeed absurd; and it has always seemed to me that men who are persuaded that they get a competent view of universal from episodical history are very like persons who should see the limbs of some body, which had once been living and beautiful, scattered and remote; and should imagine that to be quite as good as actually beholding the activity and beauty of the living creature itself. But if someone could there and then reconstruct the animal once more, in the perfection of its beauty and the charm of its vitality, and could display it to the same people, they would beyond doubt confess that they had been far from conceiving the truth, and had been little better than dreamers. For indeed some idea of a whole may be got from a part, but an accurate knowledge and clear comprehension cannot. Wherefore we must conclude that episodical history contributes exceedingly little to the familiar knowledge and secure grasp of universal history. While it is only by the combination and comparison of the separate parts of the whole—by observing their likeness and their difference—that a man can attain his object, can obtain a view at once clear and complete, and thus secure both the profit and the delight of history.

## BOOK II

56. . . . Let us inquire what is essential and to the purpose in history. Surely a historian's object should not be to amaze his readers by a series of thrilling anecdotes; nor should he seek after men's probable speeches, nor enumerate the possible consequences of the events under consideration, like a writer of tragedy; but his function is above all to record with fidelity

what was actually said or done, however commonplace it may be. For the purposes of history and tragedy are not the same, but widely opposed to each other. In the latter the subject is to thrill and delight the audience for the moment by words true to nature, in the former to instruct and convince serious students for all time by genuine words and deeds. In the latter, again, the power of beguiling an audience is the chief excellence, because the object is to create illusion; but in the former the thing of primary importance is truth, because the object is to benefit the learner.

### BOOK III<sup>7</sup>

31-2. Everyone normally adapts his words and actions to the situation of the moment and plays the corresponding part with sufficient adroitness to make the policy of the particular individual hard to define, and to obscure the truth in an appalling number of cases. The actions of the past, however, are put to the test by the actual course of events and therefore shed real light upon the aims and attitudes of individuals, revealing in some of them the existence of goodwill, good intentions, and practical helpfulness in our regard, and in others the opposite dispositions. From such examples it is frequently possible, in many situations, to discover who will sympathize with our sorrows and our grievances, and who will justify us—possibilities which add greatly to the resources of human life in both public and private affairs. For this reason, writers and readers of History ought to concentrate attention less upon the bald narrative of transactions than upon the antecedents, concomitants and consequences of any given action. If you abstract from History the “why” and the “how” and the “wherefore” of the particular transaction and the rationality or the reverse of its result, what is left of her ceases to be a science and becomes a tour de force, which may give momentary pleasure, but is of no assistance whatever for dealing with the future.

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<sup>7</sup> Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-36. Reprinted by permission.

BOOK XII<sup>8</sup>

25. It is the function of History in the first place to ascertain the exact words actually spoken, whatever they may be, and in the second place to inquire into the cause which crowned the action taken or the words spoken with success or failure. The bare statement of the facts themselves is merely entertaining without being in the least instructive, whereas the additional explanation of the cause makes the study of History a fruitful employment. The analogies that can be drawn from similar situations to our own offer materials and presumptions for forecasting the future, in regard to which they sometimes act as a warning, while at other times they encourage us to strike out boldly into the oncoming tide of events in virtue of a historical parallel. A historian, however, who suppresses both the words spoken and their cause and replaces them by fictitious expositions and verbosities, destroys, in doing so, the characteristic quality of History.

BOOK XXXCIII<sup>9</sup>

4. When it comes to the historian of public affairs, the profession should be closed altogether to the writer who values anything more highly than the truth. A historical record reaches a far wider public over a far longer period of time than any ephemeral observations; and that gives the measure of the value which the author ought to place upon the truth and which his readers ought to place upon an exalted standard of truth in the author. At the moment of crisis, it is the duty of every Hellene to help Hellas by every means in his power—to fight in her defense, to draw a veil over her sins, to plead with the victors to have mercy on her—and this, in the hour of need, I have done in all sincerity. It is equally, however, the duty of a Hellene, when

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 180. Reprinted by permission.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 201-202. Reprinted by permission.

he is bequeathing to future generations a historical record of past events, to bequeath it altogether uncontaminated by falsehood. The purpose of History is not the reader's enjoyment at the moment of perusal, but the reformation of the reader's soul, to save him from stumbling at the same stumbling block many times over.

### BOOK VI The Roman Constitution<sup>10</sup>

3-4. . . . Most of those who profess to give us authoritative instruction on this subject distinguish three kinds of constitutions, which they designate kingship, aristocracy, democracy . . . we must regard the best constitution as that which partakes of all these three elements. We cannot hold every absolute government to be a kingship, but only that which is accepted voluntarily, and is directed by an appeal to reason rather than to fear and force. Nor again is every oligarchy to be regarded as an aristocracy; the latter only exists where the power is wielded by the justest and wisest men selected on their merits. Similarly, it is not enough to constitute a democracy that the whole crowd of citizens should have the right to do whatever they wish or propose. But where reverence to the gods, honor for parents, respect to elders, obedience to laws, are traditional and habitual, in such communities if the will of the majority prevail, we may speak of the form of government as a democracy. So then we enumerate six forms of government—the three commonly spoken of, which I have just mentioned, and three more allied forms: I mean despotism, oligarchy and mob-rule. The first of these arises without artificial aid and in the natural order of events. Next to this, and produced from it by the aid of art and adjustment, comes kingship; which degenerating into the evil form allied to it, by which I mean tyranny, both are once more destroyed and aristocracy produced. Again the latter being in the course of nature perverted to oligarchy, and the people passionately avenging the unjust acts of their rulers, democracy comes into existence, which again by its violence and contempt

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<sup>10</sup> Finley, *op. cit.*, pp. 475-76, 481, 500-501. Reprinted by permission.



of law becomes mob-rule, to close the series. No clearer proof of the truth of what I say could be obtained than by a careful observation of the natural origin, genesis, and decadence of these several forms of government. For it is only by seeing distinctly how each of them is produced that a distinct view can also be obtained of its growth, zenith, and decadence, and the time, circumstance, and place in which each of these may be expected to recur. This method I have assumed to be especially applicable to the Roman constitution, because its origin and growth have from the first followed natural causes.

(A discussion follows of the origin of a constitution, and of the decay of each form of government into its perversion.)

9. . . . This is the regular cycle of constitutional revolutions, and the natural order in which constitutions change, are transformed, and return again to their original stage. If a man have a clear grasp of these principles he may perhaps make a mistake as to the dates at which this or that will happen to a particular constitution; but, if he judges without animosity or jealousy, he will rarely be entirely mistaken as to the stage of growth or decay at which it has arrived, or as to the form into which it will change. However, it is in the case of the Roman constitution that this method of inquiry will most fully teach us its formation, its growth, and zenith, as well as the changes awaiting it in the future; for this, if any constitution ever did, owed, as I said just now, its original foundation and growth to natural causes, and to natural causes will owe its decay.

57. That to all things, then, which exist there is ordained decay and change I think requires no further arguments to show, for the inexorable course of nature is sufficient to convince us of it. But in all polities we observe two sources of decay existing from natural causes, the one external, the other internal and self-produced. The external admits of no certain or fixed definition, but the internal follows a definite order. What kind of polity, then, comes naturally first, and what second, I have already stated in such a way that those who are capable of taking in the whole drift of my argument can henceforth draw their own conclusions as to the future. For it is quite clear, in my opinion.



When a commonwealth, after warding off many great dangers, has arrived at a high pitch of prosperity and undisputed power, it is evident that, by the lengthened continuance of great wealth within it, the manner of life of its citizens will become more extravagant, and that the rivalry for office, and in other spheres of activity, will become fiercer than it ought to be. And as this state of things goes on more and more, the desire of office and the shame of losing reputation, as well as the ostentation and extravagance of living, will prove the beginning of a deterioration. And of this change the people will be credited with being the authors, when they become convinced that they are being cheated by some from avarice, and are puffed up with flattery by others from love of office. For when that comes about, in their passionate resentment and acting under the dictates of anger, they will refuse to obey any longer, or to be content to have equal powers with their leaders, but will demand to have all or by far the greatest themselves. And when that comes to pass the constitution will receive a new name, which sounds better than any other in the world, liberty or democracy; but, in fact, it will become the worst of all governments, mob-rule.

With this description of the formation, growth, zenith, and present state of the Roman polity, and having discussed also its difference, for better or worse, from other polities, I will now at length bring my essay on it to an end.

### *Diodorus Siculus* (c. 90-20 B.C.)<sup>11</sup>

The authors of universal histories deserve the gratitude and recognition of their fellows for the spirit in which they give their labors for the benefit of the race. They have discovered the secret of imparting the fruits, without the perils, of experience, and therefore have knowledge of inestimable value to offer to the readers of their works. Toil and danger are the price of the practical wisdom which is bought by the experience of daily life . . . while History is able to instruct without inflicting pain by affording an insight into the failures and successes

<sup>11</sup> Toynbee, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50. Reprinted by permission.

of others. We are further indebted to these authors for their efforts to marshal the whole human race, who are all members one of another, in spite of the barriers of space and time, in one magnificent array. In attempting this, they have constituted themselves nothing less than the servants of Providence. God, in His Providence, has related in a single system the evolutions of the stars of heaven and the characters of men, and maintains them in perpetual motion to all eternity, imparting to each the lot which Destiny assigns; while the authors of universal histories, in their works, record the general transactions of the world as though it were a single community, and pass the works of Providence through the grand audit of their clearinghouse.

It is a blessing to be given opportunity to improve ourselves by taking warning from the mistakes of others, and in all the chances and changes of this mortal life to be free to copy the successes of the past instead of being compelled to make a painful trial of the present. In ordinary life, the judgment of the older generation is always preferred by the younger on account of the experience which has come to them with time; yet the knowledge which comes by History surpasses individual experience in value in proportion to its conspicuous superiority in scope and content. For every conceivable situation in life the supreme utility of this study will generally be admitted. The young are invested by it with the understanding of the old; the old find their actual experience multiplied by it a hundredfold; ordinary men are transformed by it into leaders; men born to command are stimulated by the immortality of fame which it confers to embark upon noble enterprises; soldiers, again, are encouraged by the posthumous glory which it promises to risk their lives for their country; the wicked are deterred by the eternal obloquy with which it threatens them from their evil impulses; and, in general, the good graces of History are so highly praised that some have been stimulated by the hope of them to become founders of states, others to introduce laws contributing to the security of the race, and others to make scientific or practical discoveries by which all mankind has benefited. As a result of all these activities the sum of human happiness is increased, but the palm of praise must be

rendered to History, who is the real cause of them all. History may claim to be the guardian of those who have a reputation to keep, the witness against those who have a reputation to lose, and the benefactress of humanity.



All other memorials are transitory, and exposed to destruction in many circumstances, but History, whose power extends to the limits of the world, has found in Time, the grand destroyer, a guardian of her everlasting tradition for future generations . . . In history alone there is not merely a harmony between the facts and their literary expression, but a combination of every utility. Know her by her fruits, and you will find her making for righteousness, denouncing evil, eulogizing the good, and, in a word, endowing those who study her with the sum of human wisdom.

***Agathias*** (c. 537-582 A.D.)<sup>12</sup>

A glamor of success surrounds the triumphs and trophies of war, the destruction and aggrandizement of states, and all the marvelous pageant of great events. Such prizes bring glory and pleasure to their fortunate winners, and yet, when those winners have departed this life and passed into the other world, they do not find it easy to carry their achievements with them. Oblivion breaks in and covers them, until she has distorted the true course of events; and when even the witnesses have departed in their turn, the knowledge of the facts is extinguished with them and dispersed into nothingness. Mere memory is thus an unprofitable illusion that possesses no permanence or power to keep abreast with time in its eternal prolongation. In my belief, the heroes who have deliberately risked their lives for their country or taken the burdens of others upon their shoulders, would never have done what they did in the certainty that, when they had reached the height of human achievement, their fame would perish with them and would dissolve into nothing within the short span of their own lifetimes, unless what can only be regarded as

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 87-91. Reprinted by permission.

a divine Providence had fortified the weakness of human nature by introducing the blessings and the hopes that flow from the Art of History.

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It was . . . my intention to devote my time to Poetry and never voluntarily to abandon these vicacious and delightful pursuits, but to follow the precepts of Delphi and to "know my own business." I happened, however, to have been born into a generation in which great wars broke out unexpectedly in many parts of the world, a number of uncivilized peoples migrated to new homes, and the life of the entire human race was upheaved by a series of obscure and incredible events with extraordinary *dénouements*, by violent oscillations of fortune, and by the extermination of races, the enslavement of populations and the settlement of others in their place. The spectacle of these and other similar portents inspired me with a certain misgiving as to whether I might not be sinning against the light in leaving unrecorded and unmentioned, so far as I was concerned, events of such supreme interest and importance which might have a positive value for posterity. I arrived at the conclusion that it would not be beyond my province to make some kind of experiment in historical writing, in order that my whole life might not be spent upon romance and the curiosities of literature, but might bear some practical fruit as well. This impulse of mine was further strengthened and stimulated by pressure and encouragement from many of my friends . . . A high official in the Civil Service . . . recommended to me as the truer view that History was not far removed from Poetry, and that the two arts were sisters in the same family, with nothing, conceivably, except the versification to distinguish them from one another. I was to consider myself equally at home in both camps and was to make my move and set to work with corresponding confidence and energy.

In character, my work will not resemble that of some of my contemporaries. There are, of course, others at the present time who have already set their hands to the same task, but for the most part they have paid slight regard to the truth or to the

narration of occurrence as they were actually shaped by Fortune and have elected instead to flatter and compliment a number of persons in high places in so transparent a fashion that no one else would believe them, even if they happened occasionally to tell the truth. The experts declare, however, that the exaggeration of an individual's merits is the function of journalism and journalism alone; while History, though she too does not refuse in principle to pay a tribute to successful achievement, declines, I conceive, to accept this as her aim and characteristic. Where the physiognomy of the events suggests praise or blame, History is not at liberty to strain or embroider the facts . . . I am resolved in my case, to make the truth my first consideration, whatever the consequences may be.



# 2

## *The Bible*

The nature of the Bible makes generalizations about it unusually difficult. The time-span of writing, from perhaps 1150 B.C. to possibly 150 A.D., the fact that most of the books were concerned with the history of a whole people, and the interest of ecclesiastical and other organizations over the millenia in seeing that their points of view were presented properly all have contributed to a series of incredibly complex problems. There is, of course, no single explanation of the past shared by all Biblical writers, but the various editors believed that history had significant meaning, which they brought out by the way they used—and censored—the material. The diffuseness of this material, and the impossibility of dating most of the books accurately in their redactions and editions, to say nothing of their possible original state, have made it advisable to treat the Bible as a narrative beginning with the Creation and ending with the book of Revelation, which is not the way it was written. It can only be said that in the present state of scholarship no other approach to the Biblical attitude to history as a whole seems fruitful.

The Hebrews differed profoundly from the Greeks in their attitude to the past. No Biblical writer resembles any Greek in the selections at all. The favorite Greek speculative topic was the relation between unity and multiplicity, or being and becoming. The pre-exilic Jews were uninterested in metaphysical problems. Their difficulty was on a moral level: not how to *account* for God, but how to obey His will. Greek historians learned from non-historical fields like drama, science and philosophy; the Hebrews had neither playwrights, scientists nor philosophers, in the Greek sense. The Greeks began distinguishing history from myth about the sixth century B.C. The Hebrews mingled their history with both myth and theology with the purpose of revealing Yahweh's will to a people who, because He had chosen them, were bound to hear and obey. The fact they usually did not obey gave further impetus to this peculiar form of historical writing, which was then able to show a direct relationship between ritual or moral failure and political or military disaster. The disaster is a vital part of the story: Biblical characters repeatedly are humbled in order that they may be exalted.

The chief difference between Greeks and Hebrews, then, was over ideas of divinity. The Olympic gods served as the background for human action, and with the growth of rationalism they retired more and more to a literary Valhalla. The Hebrews, on the other hand, served as the foreground for Yahweh's action: He was never a metaphysical entity, but an acting personality. He was known by what He did, and continued doing. Thus the Jewish concept of God also involved a time-process. Human history was the field of a rising crescendo of divine acts, whose power increased as the power of the Jews diminished. Neither God nor history could be understood without the other. This gave Hebrew history a reality it lacked among the post-Homeric Greeks. It was not to be interpreted by analogy to a cycle (the only cyclical reference in the Bible is that of Ecclesiastes, whose author was probably influenced by the Stoics), nor could it be treated impartially, i.e. as an end in itself. It was not an art, for the Lord's will could not be tampered with by poetic license; nor a science, for nature, being non-moral and non-personal, had no

direct connection with history. History was theophany: the manifestation of Yahweh's will. It appeared in antitheses: God—gods, Jew—Gentile, righteousness—sin. It became the subject supremely worth knowing, because it contained His commands, on the proper obedience to which depend not only the Hebrews' prosperity but their very life. Curiously, no school of rationalists ever arose during Biblical times to deny Yahweh's power; if something went wrong it was never because a stronger god had overcome Him, but because He was not paying attention, or more usually because His commands had been ignored.

Thus the Hebrews' concept of history was one of an *intersected* past. Neither the Creation, the Covenant, nor (among Christians) Jesus as the center of history nor the Last Judgment is historically verifiable; but all historical interpretation depended on them. The Greeks after Herodotus' time tended to accept facts in a more and more rational way. Reason meant participation by the individual in an objective order of eternal reality. As time passed, reason was used to explain away anthropomorphic gods, leaving participation, through knowledge in an ideal world of forms, as an end in itself. To the Hebrews, reality had entered the world by a series of historical acts, and the individual, as a member of the Hebrew community, participated in these acts by his faith that they were in fact what the Biblical authorities said they were. The Law and the Prophets became in themselves a holy account, and the belief in the reality of the acts they reported became an essential for proper thinking. This is why the occasional Biblical confusion between sequence and consequence seems naïve, even though the later Hebrews were by no means a naïve people. Causation corresponded precisely to Yahweh's will, which was inscrutable and beyond human understanding; but by using faith in a historical series of events as a method of participation in reality in somewhat the same way the Greeks used reason, the Hebrews raised history to an importance unknown in the classical world. The series of divine and human events through which the Lord's will had been revealed was given data: the only problem was to regulate worship and behavior in such a way as to ensure personal and common prosperity

(in earlier writing) and salvation (later on). The Jews' whole life as a people was bound up with Yahweh: explaining Him away would have gone far toward explaining away their national existence.

Thus history became the art of interpreting, not explaining, a long series of divine interventions. Such a series implies a uniqueness, an irreversibility that a cycle does not have; and this *Einmaligkeit* was underlined, not contradicted, by the frequent repetition of the important events: the Creation, Covenant, and Deliverance. Where the Greeks believed the past was useful chiefly in order to understand the present, the Hebrews thought of the present more as a continuation of the past, which contained many intersections, had a definite beginning and (later) an even more definite end.

The creation stories are an unsatisfactory place to begin, partly because they were written much later than the more historical parts of the Pentateuch, and partly because the problem of the origin of sin, which they purport to explain, is unclear. The Garden of Eden, the Hebrew Golden Age, contains the serpent, a frequent near-eastern figure of evil, much later identified with Satan. Adam's sons begin the line of the human race. Typically, great attention is given to geneology, and also typically the legends are parables, with a moral. For instance, the story of Cain and Abel reflects the conflict between a pastoral and an agricultural society; but it is used to drive home the lesson of sin and judgment. The line of Adam's descendants continues to the Flood, where humanity is re-created with Noah's sons.

Abraham is made responsible for the Covenant or contract with God, an even more fundamental idea for Jews than that of God as Creator. This relationship is carried on in Canaan and then in Egypt. The contract specifies certain acts by each party: God will not break His part, but failure of Abraham's successors and their tribes to keep theirs will lead to destruction. Typically, an individual personifies an act almost certainly corporate, just as an individual criminal in a primitive society opens his whole tribe to retribution.

The Exodus under Moses, the first truly Hebrew leader, begins



specifically Jewish history. The story of deliverance from Pharaoh summarizes Jewish attitude to the past: the nation was not thought to have solved its own problems, but to have been repeatedly *delivered*. Yahweh (Jehovah) appeared as a jealous God, specifically jealous of other gods or "Baalim" worshipped by many of the Hebrews. The revelation of the Ten Commandments (Abraham's Covenant was repeated on Sinai) and the migration into the promised land (the settlement repeats the act of creation) solidified the basic contractual relationship, based on historical acts. The account of these acts was given not only a constitutional but a liturgical significance; thus the authorship of the whole Pentateuch was ascribed to Moses himself. As the race had been founded by Adam and again by Noah's sons, so the nation was founded by Abraham and again by Moses; but always under Yahweh's guidance.

The account of the wars for possession of Canaan under the Judges reads much like that of other near-eastern peoples: each nation fought its enemies in the name of its tribal god. But where other confederations usually were led by a king who represented the god, participated in some of his qualities, and piously magnified his own successes in the god's name, the Hebrews had no king save Yahweh, the Lord of Hosts. When Saul finally was elected king at Ramah, one account states that it provoked Yahweh's displeasure, even though the kingdom flourished under David and Solomon.

With the split of Solomon's kingdom at his death into Israel and Judah a line of prophets, from Amos to Second (Deutero-) Isaiah, brought about several basic changes in the Hebrews' religion, and, therefore, in their attitude to history. These prophets, of whom only a few are represented in the readings, are a peculiar phenomenon, limited to Judaism: nothing like them occurs in other contemporary cultures. They present Yahweh as a God to be worshipped not with ceremonial exactitude but with a clean heart. Their idea of political history looks like a drama in six acts. It has a contrapuntal rhythm: pride, sin, warning, catastrophe, repentance, and finally new pride, somewhat like the Greek *koros-hybris-até*. The sins of the Hebrews provoke an in-

evitable response in the rulers of Assyria, Egypt or Chaldea, who serve as the rods of Yahweh's anger. But while the dialectic takes place on a political plane, always it is to be understood morally, like the stories in the Pentateuch. Military disasters are *invariably* the result of failure to observe Yahweh's commands.

Three other significant ideas appear in the prophets: the Day of Yahweh, the Saving Remnant, and Messiah. Before Amos' time the Day of Yahweh had been conceived as one when all His enemies would be destroyed, presumably in battle; Amos declares it to be a day of punishment on Israel, although there is hope for a godly remnant, who will survive to carry out the Lord's will. First Isaiah (chapters 1-39) elaborates both ideas, and adds that of Messiah (the anointed one), who first appears as a righteous ruler, like Cyrus of Persia. But Messiah is one who is *to come*: as the present grows worse, the prophets turn more and more to the future tense. Later prophets show the Day of Yahweh as a time of doom and destruction, and develop it in apocalyptic imagery. Deutero-Isaiah (chapters 40-55), about 200 years after First Isaiah, explains Hebrew political disasters as part of the Covenant, including both a warning and a promise. Messiah now becomes a servant, suffering on behalf of others—perhaps he is Israel itself—to whom Yahweh has entrusted the task of leading not only the Hebrews, but through them *all* people, to redemption: "a new heaven and a new earth." The disasters have been accomplished, but the Promise is still to come. No longer worldly conquest, but expectation of Messiah, is the Lord's plan of redemption.

Deutero-Isaiah may well have been written during the Babylonian exile in the sixth century. The Hebrews had become a subject people, and their literature began to reflect a new note: no longer enmity toward adversaries, but bitter hatred toward oppressors, and the use of Yahweh to bring about a victory their own arms could no longer achieve. This occurs particularly in apocalyptic writings such as the book of Daniel. *Daniel* was probably provoked, like the Maccabean revolt, by the Seleucid sovereign Antiochus Epiphanes, who in the second century B.C. erected an altar to Olympian Zeus on the site of the temple altar

in Jerusalem and had swine's flesh sacrificed on it ("the abomination of desolation"). The book has all the characteristic apocalyptic traits, for example symbolic dream-imagery and a large cast of angels and demons. These do not necessarily indicate a loss of contact with everyday reality; they also may be a form of code to confuse the police, for apocalyptic literature appears usually among a people under persecution. As a further protection the book is attributed to Daniel, a sixth-century prophet. This would gain it wider acceptance, because the canon of the Old Testament had been mostly fixed by about 200 B.C., and new writings were not being added.

The meaning of *Daniel* would have been clear to second-century Jews, already saturated with imagery in contemporary writing. The four empires of Nebuchadnezzar's dream, and the four beasts of Daniel's dream, probably correspond to the kingdoms of the Babylonians, Medes, Greeks and finally the horror of Antiochus. The ten horns may well be Alexander's generals, the Diadochi. The stone that strikes the image is, of course, the Jewish kingdom. The angels are led by Prince Michael, later St. Michael the Archangel, and the demons by Satan, who in earlier writing had been a "Messenger of the Lord." Two other typical apocalyptic characteristics in *Daniel* are determinism (Yahweh's victory, achieved without human help, is predestined) and polarization (the extremes of good and evil: no middleground is left). The intention is not at all to present a narrative of intersected human events, as in the more historical biblical books, but to give encouragement to a persecuted people for whom human justice has been delayed too long: the day of Yahweh now means judgment on His enemies not in time but in eternity. The chief elements in the picture have become "miracle, mystery and authority." The selection from St. Matthew's gospel repeats some of this imagery.

The New Testament stands within Jewish tradition, but not wholly. All its books were written in Greek. Their authors were members of a religious community beginning to be permeated by Hellenistic influences, and already partly Gentile. While their interests are diverse, they have a good deal in common. In history

as such they have no interest; the past is only of value as proof of the future. Christ, the Messiah, has come, as King (in a spiritual sense), as High Priest, and as suffering servant. He is of proper descent (the opening sentence of the New Testament is "The book of the geneology of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham") and is held to have fulfilled the messianic prophecies. Son of God and Son of Man, He has come both as *Kairos*, the fulfillment of time, and *Logos*, the timeless Word of God. After His resurrection and ascension, the Holy Spirit has descended at Pentecost as a pledge of God's presence forever in His community, no longer His "people."

The New Testament handled the problem of the meaning of Christ on several levels, but these included attempts to answer two major historical problems. First, in what sense has He changed ideas of the past? It is apparent to these writers that a decisive break in history has occurred: it becomes a double movement, not a single one (B.C. and A.D.). Half of it looks backward: the past is only of importance insofar as it prefigures Christ. To St. Paul, He is the second Adam, who has washed away the sin resulting from the first. What was lost in the Garden of Eden has been found again in the Garden of Gethsemane; the act of creation has been repeated in redemption. What was promised to a chosen people is now offered to all mankind. Christ has sealed the New Covenant, prophesied by Jeremiah; the Christians have become the New Israel. The fulfillment of history has taken place once for all, not on a supramundane plane of angelic and demonic powers, but on earth, and within history itself. But not through progress in the human sense at all; for by a supreme irony, the climax of two millenia of religious development was the group of zealots for God, the defenders of Israel, who crucified the Messiah. Human development has not carried the historical line higher; God has intersected it with the greatest intervention of all.

But the other half of history looks forward, to a future consummation of the events the past has revealed. If Christ is in Himself the Consummation, the Day of Yahweh, how can there be any future? The answer is the *Parousia*, the Second Coming,



which Christ had predicted but whose appearance unaccountably had been delayed. The imagery for it was provided in the eschatological book of Revelation, which like *Daniel* was written in a time of persecution, perhaps under Nero or Domitian. Eschatology is the futurist side of apocalypticism. It is a speed-up process, an attempt to state theodicy not by parables but by dramatic events, usually in the immediate future. The purpose of *Revelation* was to make two things clear: the reality of radical evil, and a Judgment whose utter finality is stressed by putting it at the end of time, no longer on representative peoples but on responsible individuals. It was to serve, in the Hebrew way, both as encouragement and as warning. Like *Daniel*, it is dramatic, not reasoned; but it summarizes the rationale of history as many persecuted Christians saw it, both then and for a long time to come.

## READINGS <sup>1</sup>

### *I The Creation Legends*

. . . God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them. And God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air and over every living thing that moves upon the earth . . . And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good. (Gen. 1)

And the Lord God planted a garden in Eden, in the East; and there he put the man who he had formed. And out of the ground the Lord God made to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil . . . And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge

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<sup>1</sup> The readings are taken from the Revised Standard Version of the Bible, Copyrighted 1946 and 1952.

of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die . . . The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and while he slept took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh; and the rib which the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman . . . And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed. (Gen. 2)

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Now the serpent was more subtle than any other wild creature that the Lord God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God say, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden?'" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden; but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden. But the Lord God called to the man, and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said, "I heard the sound of thee in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself." He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?" The man said, "The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this that you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent beguiled me, and I ate."

[God curses the serpent to go on his belly, the woman to pain

in childbearing and to subjection to her husband, and the man to hard labor and to mortality.]

The man called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living. And the Lord God made for Adam and his wife garments of skins, and clothed them. Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil; and now, lest he put forth his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever"—therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from which he was taken. He drove out the man; and at the east of the garden of Eden he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Gen. 3)

Now Adam knew Eve his wife, and she conceived and bore Cain . . . and his brother Abel. Now Abel was a keeper of sheep, and Cain a tiller of the ground. In the course of time Cain brought to the Lord an offering of the fruit of the ground, and Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard. So Cain was very angry . . . and rose up against his brother Abel, and killed him.

Then the Lord said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He said, "I do not know; am I my brother's keeper?" And the Lord said, "What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you till the ground, it shall no longer yield to you its strength; you shall be a fugitive and a wanderer on the earth" . . .

Cain knew his wife, and she conceived and bore Enoch; and he built a city, and called its name after the name of his son, Enoch . . .

And Adam knew his wife again, and she bore a son and called his name Seth, for she said, "God has appointed for me another child instead of Abel, for Cain slew him." To Seth also a son was born, and he called his name Enosh. At that time men began to call upon the name of the Lord. (Gen. 4)

## ***II The Covenant***

Now the Lord said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth will bless themselves." (Gen. 12)

When Abram was ninety-nine years old the Lord appeared to Abram, and said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me and you, and will multiply you exceedingly. Then Abram fell on his face; and God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God."

And God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your descendants after you: every male among you shall be circumcised." (Gen. 17)

\* \* \*

God appeared to Jacob again, when he came from Paddanaram, and blessed him. And God said to him, "Your name is Jacob; no longer shall your name be called Jacob, but Israel shall be your name . . . The land which I gave to Abraham and Isaac I will



give to you, and I will give the land to your descendants after you." (Gen. 35)

\* \* \*

Now Moses was keeping the flock of his father-in-law, Jethro, the priest of Midian; and he led his flock to the west side of the wilderness, and came to Horeb, the mountain of God. And the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush; and he looked, and lo, the bush was burning, yet it was not consumed. And Moses said, "I will turn aside and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt." When the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, "Moses, Moses!" And he said, "Here am I." Then he said, "Do not come near; put off your shoes from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." And he said, "I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

Then the Lord said, "I have seen the affliction of my people who are in Egypt, and have heard their cry because of their taskmasters; I know their sufferings, and I have come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey, to the place of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites." (Exod. 3)

\* \* \*

Then Joshua gathered all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and summoned the elders, the heads, the judges, and the officers of Israel; and they presented themselves before God. And Joshua said . . . "If you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord" . . . And the people said to Joshua, "The Lord our God we will serve, and his voice we will obey." So Joshua

made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. (Josh. 24)

\* \* \*

Now the angel of the Lord went up from Gilgal to Bochim. And he said, "I brought you up from Egypt, and brought you into the land which I swore to give to your fathers. I said, 'I will never break my covenant with you and you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall break down their altars.' But you have not obeyed my command. What is this you have done? So now I say, I will not drive them out before you; but they shall become adversaries to you, and their gods shall be a snare to you." When the angel of the Lord spoke these words to all the people in Israel, the people lifted up their voices and wept . . .

And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals; . . . and they provoked the Lord to anger. They forsook the Lord, and served the Baals and the Ashtaroth. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and he gave them over to plunderers, who plundered them; and he sold them into the power of their enemies round about, so that they could no longer withstand their enemies. Whenever they marched out, the hand of the Lord was against them for evil, as the Lord had warned, and as the Lord had sworn to them; and they were in sore straits.

Then the Lord raised up judges, who saved them out of the power of those who had plundered them . . . But whenever the judge died, they turned back and behaved worse than their fathers, going after other gods, serving them and bowing down to them; they did not drop any of their practices or their stubborn ways. So the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel . . . (Judg. 2)

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah, and said to him, "Behold, you are old and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint for us a king to govern us like all the nations" . . . And the Lord said to Samuel, "Hearken to the voice of the people in all that they say to you;

for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them." . . . [So Samuel said] "These will be the ways of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and appoint them to his chariots and to be his horsemen . . . he will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers . . . he will take the tenth of your grain and of your vineyards and give it to his officers and to his servants . . . he will take the tenth of your flocks, and you shall be his slaves. And in that day you will cry out because of your king, whom you have chosen for yourselves; but the Lord will not answer you in that day." (I Sam. 8)

\* \* \*

In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah Hoshea the son of Elah began to reign in Samaria over Israel, and he reigned nine years. And he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, yet not as the kings of Israel who were before him. Against him came up Shalmaneser king of Assyria; and Hoshea became his vassal, and paid him tribute. But the king of Assyria found treachery in Hoshea . . . [and] shut him up and bound him in prison. Then the king of Assyria invaded all the land and came to Samaria, and for three years he besieged it. In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria captured Samaria, and he carried the Israelites away to Assyria . . . and this was so, because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord . . . And the people of Israel did secretly against the Lord their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places at all their towns, from watch tower to fortified city; they set for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree; and there they burned incense on all the high places, as the nations did whom the Lord carried away before them . . . But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been who did not believe in the Lord their God. They despised his statutes, and his covenant that he had made with their fathers . . . [They] made for themselves molten images of two calves; and they made an Asherah, and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they burned their sons and their daughters

as offerings, and used divination and sorcery, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them out of his sight; and none was left but the tribe of Judah only. (II Kings 17)



Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the Lord. He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who made him swear by God; . . . all the leading priests and the people were likewise exceedingly unfaithful, following all the abominations of the nations; . . . they kept mocking the messengers of God, despising his words, and scoffing at his prophets, till the wrath of the Lord rose against his people, till there was no remedy. Therefore he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who slew their young men with the sword . . . and the treasures of the house of the Lord, and of the king and of his princes, all these he brought to Babylon . . . He took into exile in Babylon those who had escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him . . . (II Chron. 36)

### ***III The Prophecies***

Woe to you who desire the day of the Lord! Why would you have the day of the Lord? It is darkness, and not light; as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house and leaned with his hand against the wall, and a serpent bit him. Is not the day of the Lord darkness, and not light, and gloom with no brightness in it? I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. Take away from me the noise of your songs; to the melody of your harps I will not listen. But let jus-



tice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream. (Amos 5)

\* \* \*

Your country lies desolate, your cities are burned with fire; in your very presence aliens devour the land; it is desolate, as overthrown by aliens . . . When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood. Wash yourselves; make yourselves clean; remove the evil of your doings from my eyes; cease to do evil, learn to do good, seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow.

Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you shall eat the good of the land; but if you refuse and rebel, you shall be devoured by the sword; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken." (Isa. 1)

In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious. In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant which is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea. He will raise an ensign for the nations, and will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah, from the four corners of the earth. The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim. But they shall swoop down upon the shoulder of the Philistines in the west, and together they shall plunder the people of the east. They shall put forth their hand against Edom and Moab, and the Ammonites shall obey them. And the Lord will utterly destroy the tongue of the sea of Egypt; and will wave his hand over the River with his scorching wind, and smite it into seven channels that men may cross dryshod. And there will be a highway from As-



syria for the remnant which is left of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt. (Isa. 11)

\* \* \*

Behold, a king will reign in righteousness, and princes will rule in justice. Each will be like a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest, like streams of water in a dry place, like the shade of a great rock in a weary land . . .

For the palace will be forsaken, the populous city deserted; the hill and the watchtower will become dens for ever, a joy of wild asses, a pasture of flocks; until the Spirit is poured upon us from on high, and the wilderness becomes a fruitful field, and the fruitful field is deemed a forest. Then justice will dwell in the wilderness, and righteousness abide in the fruitful field. And the effect of righteousness will be peace, and the result of righteousness, quietness and trust forever. (Isa. 32)

\* \* \*

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the Lord's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God." (Isa. 40)

\* \* \*

Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high. As many were astonished at him—his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men—so shall he startle many nations; kings shall shut their mouths because of him; for that which has not been told them they shall see, and that which they have not heard they shall understand.

Who has believed what we have heard? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty

that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his one way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isa. 52-53)

\* \* \*

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord. But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. And no longer shall each man teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, says the Lord; for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31)

#### *IV The Apocalyptic Visions*

In the second year of the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, [he] had dreams; and his spirit was troubled, and his sleep left him. [He asks Daniel to interpret his dream. Daniel replies:] “You saw, O King, and behold, a great image. This image, mighty and of exceeding brightness, stood before you, and its appearance was frightening. The head of this image was of fine gold, its breast and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. As you looked, a stone was cut out by no human hand, and it smote the image

on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces; then [the rest of the image] was broken in pieces and became like the chaff of the summer threshing floors; and the wind carried them away so that not a trace of them could be found. But the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. [The interpretation:] You, O king, the king of kings, to whom God has given the kingdom, the power, and the might, and the glory . . . are the head of gold. After you shall arise another kingdom inferior to you, and yet a third kingdom of bronze, which shall rule over all the earth. And there shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron, because iron breaks to pieces and shatters all things; and like iron which crushes, it shall break and crush all these. And as you saw the feet and toes partly of potter's clay and partly of iron, . . . it shall be a divided kingdom; but some of the firmness of iron shall be in it . . . And in the days of those kings the God of Heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed, nor shall its sovereignty be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever . . . The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure." (Dan. 2)

\* \* \*

In the first year of Belshazzar king of Babylon, Daniel had a dream . . . "Behold, the four winds of heaven were stirring up the great sea. And four great beasts came up out of the sea, different from one another. The first was like a lion and had eagle's wings. Then as I looked its wings were plucked off, and it was lifted up from the ground and made to stand upon two feet like a man; and the mind of a man was given to it. Another beast [was] like a bear; it was raised up on one side; it had three ribs in its mouth between its teeth; and it was told, 'Arise, devour much flesh.' After this I looked, and lo, another, like a leopard, with four wings of a bird on its back; and the beast had four heads; and dominion was given to it. After this I saw in the night visions, and behold, a fourth beast, terrible and dreadful and exceedingly strong; and it had great iron teeth; it devoured

and broke in pieces, and stamped the residue with its feet. It was different from all the beasts that were before it; and it had ten horns. I considered the horns, and behold, there came up among them another horn, a little one, before which three of the first horns were plucked up by the roots; and behold, in this horn were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking great things. As I looked, thrones were placed and one that was ancient of days took his seat; his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him; a thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him; the court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. I looked then because of the sound of the great words which the horn was speaking. And as I looked, the beast was slain, and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire . . . behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away.

[The interpretation:] These four great beasts are four kings who shall arise out of the earth. But the saints of the Most High shall receive the kingdom, and possess it forever . . . As for the fourth beast, its kingdom shall be different from all the kingdoms, and it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break it to pieces. As for the ten horns, out of this kingdom ten kings shall arise, and another shall arise after them; he shall be different from the former ones, and shall put down three kings. He shall speak words against the Most High, and shall think to change the times and the law; and they shall be given into his hand for a time, two times, and a half a time. But the court shall sit in judgment, and his dominion shall be taken away, to be consumed and destroyed to the end. And the kingdom and the dominion and the greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High; their king-



dom shall be an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey them." (Dan. 7)

\* \* \*

[A time of destruction and slaughter:] At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt . . . But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. (Dan. 12)

\* \* \*

As he sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will this be, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the close of the age?" And Jesus answered, . . . "many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ', and they will lead many astray. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars . . . For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes . . . Then they will deliver you up to tribulation, and put you to death . . . And many false prophets will arise and lead many astray . . . But he who endures to the end will be saved . . . [so] let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains . . . for then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been from the beginning of the world . . . Immediately after the tribulations of those days the sun will be darkened . . . and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken; then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of man coming on the clouds with power and great glory; and he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call . . . when you see all these things, you will know that he is near, at the very gates.

Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away, till all these things take place." (Matt. 24)

## *V The New Covenant*

Therefore as sin came into the world through one man and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all men sinned—sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, but sin is not counted where there is no law. Yet death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those whose sins were not like the transgressions of Adam, who was a type of the one who was to come.

But the free gift is not like the trespass. For if many died through one man's trespass, much more have the grace of God and the free gift in the grace of that one man Jesus Christ abounded for many. And the free gift is not like the effect of that one man's sin. For the judgment following one trespass brought condemnation, but the free gift following many trespasses brings justification. If, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ.

Then as one man's trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man's act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by one man's obedience many will be made righteous. Law came in, to increase the trespass; but where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Rom. 5)

\* \* \*

Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared [with two parts: the Holy Place and the inner Holy of Holies] . . . The priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but

into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people . . .

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation), he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant . . . For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Heb. 9)

## ***VI The End of Time***

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon; and the dragon and his angels fought, but they were defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his

angels were thrown down with him. And I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come, for the accuser of our brethren has been thrown down . . . (Rev. 12)

\* \* \*

Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain. And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years were ended. After that he must be loosed for a little while.

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom judgment was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who have been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshipped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life again, and reigned with Christ a thousand years . . . And when the thousand years are ended, Satan will be loosed from his prison and will come out to deceive the nations which are at the four corners of the earth, that is, Gog and Magog, to gather them for the battle; their number is like the sand of the sea. And they marched up over the broad earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city; but fire came down from heaven and consumed them, and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

Then I saw a great white throne and him who sat upon it; from his presence earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead



in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire. (Rev. 20)

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband; and I heard a great voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling of God is with men. He will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain any more, for the former things have passed away." (Rev. 21)

## *St. Augustine*

(354-430)

St. Augustine was neither a philosopher nor historian, but a theologian who used philosophy and history, as well as all other fields of thought known in his time, to build a massive apologia for the Catholic church. His writing was affected deeply by the convulsions of expiring Roman society of which he is the greatest witness, and the Roman turmoil is paralleled by that in his own life, during which he passed from Manichaeism through neo-Platonism to Catholicism. Incapable of impartiality, he writes almost always in attack or defense, and nowhere more than in his magnum opus, *The City of God*.

Although neither Augustine's style nor his thought are at all simple, his postulates are fairly clear. The most important one is his belief that God rules this world and the next, and that the best way to understand God's will is through the Bible, as interpreted by the church. No secular author, not even Plato, the greatest of philosophers, can be compared with the Bible, the revelation of reality itself. God and the soul, he once said, were the only things he wished to know, and the only significant parts

of history are the ones that related to these: the rest is idle curiosity.

The second postulate is that of sin and grace. Man was created good, but fell, and the primal sin in Eden is thus the most important event in human history. It has corrupted not only the human will but the mind also, and as a result man without grace (grace is God acting) will always think crookedly and behave badly. The Bible narrates the story of sin and grace up to and beyond the Incarnation, the central event in history, whose end will be the last judgment. History is thus, as in the Bible, less man's action than his reaction to God's action. His past on earth can be seen either in the Bible or in secular writings (Augustine's discussion of what we would call history confines itself almost wholly to the Hebrews and Romans); but it can be understood only in relation to the three basic events: creation, redemption and judgment. In comparison with such cosmic occurrences, the rises and falls of empires are small matters.

The third postulate is the nature of explanation itself. Augustine is uninterested in Greek historical ideas; instead, he applies a mixture of Greek philosophical analysis and Roman rhetoric to Hebrew ideas. But this kind of analysis has distinct limitations for him: there is nothing wrong with reason as a tool, but there are areas of reality to which it simply does not apply. Here it must be used together with faith—and the act of faith, restraining and guiding, has to come first. Faith means assent to revealed truth, to propositions or experiences which are credible because they have been accepted over the centuries by trustworthy authorities and approved by the teaching body of Christianity. In history as elsewhere, reason is not to be directed to searching out what actually happened in a given case so much as to interpreting received accounts in the light of a plan already revealed in its final form. Whereas the Old Testament attempts to explain numerous Divine intersections and the New Testament interprets these intersections in the light of a once-for-all event, Augustine incorporates the whole Bible into a body of doctrine still in process of being established and argued over, partly by Augustine himself. But this interpretation necessarily involved much more his-

torical explanation than in the New Testament, not only because there was a longer past to explain by faith—the church's antiquity was one of its chief credentials—but also because there appeared to be a longer future.

The fourth postulate, connected with the third, is that orthodoxy is necessary for sound knowledge. Much of *The City of God* is devoted to answering the arguments both of pagans and of Christian heretics. But Augustine's explanation here is not quite as clear, partly because attacking one heresy sometimes involves partial acceptance of another. His arguments are soaked in Greek thought, particularly in the use of Platonic ideal forms, of which earthly ideas and institutions are dim copies, and in his theory of peace as harmonious proportion. The dualism of his two cities, on the other hand, has a distinctly Manichaean flavor, although it also carries out the theme of apocalyptic Biblical writing, even though the Apocalypse had now been transferred to a perhaps far distant future.

With these postulates in mind, Augustine's method of viewing the past should be clear. History begins with a divine act a few thousand years before his own time, and will continue to another divine act whose distance beyond his age is not known, nor worth inquiring into, but whose nature is completely definite. The only events worth studying are those which show how human thought and action ought to be directed in relation to these Acts of God: how to believe rightly, and how to behave properly. Thus the events he used are invariably either those narrated in scripture (particularly the Old Testament, whose historical images are clearer) or those which can be allegorically interpreted by it. In *On Christian Doctrine* (ii,28), he says that "It is one thing to record events, and quite another to teach people what they ought to do. The task of history is to record events faithfully and serviceably." It is evident that he did not regard *The City of God* as a primarily historical work at all.

But he happened to be a North African bishop at the time of the fall of Rome. As the most powerful writer in the western church at the time, he could hardly avoid explaining the odd coincidence that the Christian God had allowed the Eternal City



—after a thousand years of existence—to fall almost immediately after it had officially accepted, and enforced, the Christian religion. Eusebius, the greatest Christian writer on history before Augustine, had held that Christianity brought temporal blessings to mankind as well as spiritual ones. Such a cataclysmic event as the Sack by Alaric did not fit very well with Eusebius' idea. How could it be explained by faith? If God rules nature, He must rule history too, and historical events, even catastrophes, must be explicable on the same terms as other events. Thus a new theory of history had to be developed, with the chief desideratum that it explain catastrophes in a satisfactory way. Augustine did so between about 410 A.D. (the date of the Sack) and 426, beginning apparently with a series of pamphlets which showed that the Sack was really a blessing in disguise. He explained it by comparing its events with earlier, even bloodier ages, and by omitting to mention that the soldiers who spared the churches were, at least in large part, Christians themselves. Gradually the framework widened, until it included a discussion of every kind of knowledge, and ended with the final state of the damned and the blessed. Thus the greatest of all Christian treatises on history came into being in an almost unconscious way.

The basic theme of the book is that of two cities, or societies, those of God and of earth. Attempts have been made to equate the earthly city with the state, and the city of God with the church, and there is some reason for doing this; but it is not exactly what Augustine means. In his thought a man becomes like what he loves, and so does a community. The earthly city is not an evil group; nothing in existence is wholly evil. It comprises those who, banded together in society, at least love the peace and justice that any social order brings. But these loves, by themselves, are insufficient: they must give way to the love of God, which binds together those in His city. Such a classification inevitably raises problems. What Augustine is saying is that from the beginning of time *all* men have belonged to one city or the other, i.e. have given their allegiance to God or to some lesser goal. This may be true, and it makes a fine contrast, but it does not subject itself easily to analysis, and raises especially the ques-

tion of societies whose members have never heard of one God. Augustine does not discuss this problem, since it cannot be explained by faith. But this dualism, working through all time, is the basis of his theory of history, and it develops what had started as a moral tract into a philosophy of history. On earth, at least in the Hebrew and Roman world, the members of both cities are mingled, and often indistinguishable; after death they will be found to have chosen one city or the other.

Augustine's treatment of this involves him in a whole theodicy: How do you explain evil when everything, without exception, that God has created is good? His answer is that evil is always perversion: choice of a lesser good, in preference to a greater good man was intended to have. This deliberate wrong choice can be traced from Adam through Cain down to Romulus and the events of Augustine's own time. Over against those who have made it stands the small group of those who, guided by grace, have chosen the better part. Their history, rather than that of the denizens of the earthly city, is the central theme of *The City of God*. They are considered as a body rather than as individuals: times had changed since the New Testament, and he was not defending a persecuted band of believers, but an imperial institution (or at least its heavenly counterpart), of which he was himself one of the great administrators. He does not deal with individuals except insofar as they pertain to collective life: moral and social problems, as in Greek thought, are always interwoven. But on the other hand the groups he is explaining are always seen in terms of the problems they present to individuals.

Was Rome, of which Augustine was, of course, a citizen, basically good or bad: an allegory of Jerusalem, or of Babylon; of eternity (as suggested by Virgil) or of the fourth empire of Daniel (St. John Chrysostom and St. Jerome)? Augustine believed it was neither: Rome is no Jerusalem, and its fall is of no real significance except as a test for the individuals who suffered there. To the Jews the fate of their earthly capital was a symbol of Yahweh's attitude to them: if Jerusalem fell, it must be because the Lord's people had sinned. Some of Augustine's more nervous contemporaries, carrying the analogy a step further, felt

that the fall of Rome presaged the end of the world and the Second Coming. Augustine, on the other hand, believed that temporal prosperity and divine love were not correlated at all. Rome had been ruled by good emperors, whom he praises—but for their piety and justice, not the success of their arms; and by bad ones, whom he condemns roundly. Good men had suffered with bad in the Sack; but suffering, like prosperity, is not important to Christians. Under the circumstances, it is difficult to see how he could have taken any other position.

Can the Roman empire be called an advance over those of the Egyptians or Babylonians? Only insofar as it has brought peace and justice and has adopted the true religion to help it in enforcing them. This raises the question of whether Augustine believed in progress. The Greeks did not, nor did the Old Testament writers. On the other hand, St. Ambrose and St. Jerome, his contemporaries, had implied that the Roman empire, with its universal peace, was a great improvement over earlier states. Augustine's agreement is limited to the extent noted above. His development of history is linear, but the line does not seem either to ascend or descend greatly, except that Christian (*not* Roman) society is obviously an improvement over that of the pagans, just as Jewish society was preferable to that of the Gentiles. In the past, God's will had been revealed progressively, as His people became more fully prepared; but these definitive revelations had ended, even though, somewhat surprisingly, history had not. If progress can be defined as movement toward a goal, then it exists—but only for the city of God. The only destiny of the earthly city is destruction, as the Sack enabled him so conclusively to point out.

How far is man free to choose to which city he will belong? The answer is not wholly clear. Freedom to choose well is a gift of grace: to make grace the result of a good choice would be to make Augustine a Pelagian. Man's freedom, in his thought, is always subordinate to God's freedom, and those who have chosen His city seem to have done so more as a result of His election than of their own choice. On the other hand, he is bitterly sarcastic in his treatment of astrology, with its denial of human free

freedom

will. All his comments about the behavior of good and evil men in history presuppose freedom to choose between alternatives. But by freedom he always seems to mean, not doing as you please, but as God wills. Thus, a good man, who is not free to do evil, will be more free than a man who, less advanced in the life of grace, can choose either way.

The fact that *The City of God* does not meet our canons of history, even philosophical history, would not have disturbed St. Augustine unduly: it did not meet the secular canons of his time either. He was not only quite uninterested in discovering "objective historical truth"; indeed, the phrase would have had no meaning for him. The questions he is answering are simply not those a historian asks. History by itself is a form of what he called "scientific" knowledge, and "science" was useless to him except as an aid to divine studies, or "wisdom." Thus his purpose, in *The City of God*, was to raise history as science to history as wisdom. He does so by presenting a narrative of certain past events and a prediction of certain future events, not chosen to illustrate political or intellectual development, but selected for their allegorical significance in the interplay of divine and human nature in a field partly natural, but mostly supernatural. It is as if the Bible were being re-written from a late Roman point of view. Revelation is not explained in terms of history; history is explained in terms of revelation. History serves only, in the last analysis, as one example of a divine pattern whose outlines, while sometimes dim, were intended to be recognized, and then acted upon, by a select group of humans created for that purpose.

Since Augustine did not intend *The City of God* to be a philosophy of history, and since "explanation by faith" does not fall within our own normal approach to the subject, how far can it be called a philosophy of history at all? It is only one to the extent that Augustine's own use of theology, for its justification, included an attempt to show that history was worth studying because it had an intrinsic meaning: there were signs of God's will to be noted in reviewing the past that could not be discovered as well in any other way. The book's stature—it is the greatest work of the greatest of the Latin Fathers—was recognized by later writ-



ers, and for a thousand years historians used it for a mine. For all the horrors of the Sack of Rome, we owe to it not only a work that profoundly influenced almost all European interpretation of history through the seventeenth century, but one of the most creative attempts to explain history that any Christian has ever made.

## READINGS <sup>1</sup>

### *I The Lessons of the Sack of Rome*

The glorious city of God is my theme in this work, which you, my dearest son Marcellinus, suggested, and which is due to you by my promise. I have undertaken its defense against those who prefer their own gods to the Founder of this city—a city surpassingly glorious whether we view it as it still lives by faith in this fleeting course of time, and sojourns as a stranger in the midst of the ungodly, or as it will dwell in the fixed stability of its eternal seat, which it now patiently waits for, expecting until righteousness shall return to judgment, and it obtains, by virtue of its excellence, final victory and perfect peace . . . We must also speak of the earthly city, which, though it is mistress of the nations, is itself ruled by the lust for power. (Preface)

For to this earthly city belong the enemies against whom I must defend the city of God. Many of them, reclaimed from their ungodly error, have become creditable citizens of this city; but many are so inflamed with hatred against it, and are so ungrateful to its Redeemer for His extraordinary benefits, as to forget that they would now be unable to utter a single word against it, had they not found in its sacred places, as they fled

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<sup>1</sup> The readings are all from Volume II of *Basic Writings of Saint Augustine*, edited by Whitney J. Oates. Copyright 1948 by Random House, Inc. Reprinted by permission of Random House and T. & T. Clark.

from the enemy's steel, that life in which they now boast themselves. Have not these very Romans, who were spared by the barbarians through their respect for Christ, become enemies to the name of Christ? The reliquaries of the martyrs and the churches of the apostles bear witness to this; for in the sack of the city they were open sanctuary for all who fled to them, whether Christian or Pagan. To their very threshold the bloodthirsty enemy raged; there his murderous fury stopped. To them such of the enemy as had any pity conveyed those whom they had given quarter to, lest any less merciful might fall upon them. And, indeed, when even those murderers who everywhere else showed themselves pitiless came to those spots where that was forbidden which the license of war permitted in every other place, their furious rage for slaughter was bridled, and their eagerness to take prisoners was quenched. Thus escaped multitudes who now reproach the Christian religion, and impute to Christ the ills that have befallen their city; but the preservation of their own lives—a boon they owe to the respect entertained for Christ by the barbarians—they attribute not to our Lord, but to their own good luck. They ought rather, if they had any right perceptions, to attribute the severities and hardships inflicted by their enemies to the divine Providence which usually reforms men's depraved manners by chastisement, and which exercises the righteous and praiseworthy in the same way—either bearing them, when they have passed through the trial, to a better world, or detaining them on earth for ulterior purposes. And they ought to attribute it to the spirit of these Christian times that, contrary to the custom of war, those bloodthirsty barbarians spared them, and spare them for Christ's sake. (Book I, chapter i)

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Why was this divine compassion extended even to the ungodly and ungrateful? Because it was the mercy of Him who daily maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. Although some of these men, realizing this, repent of their wickedness and reform, some, as the

apostle says, "despising the riches of His goodness and long-suffering, after their hardness and impenitent heart, treasure up unto themselves wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds": nevertheless the patience of God still calls the wicked to repentance, just as the scourge of God educates the good to patience. And so, too, does the mercy of God embrace the good that it may cherish them, as the severity of God arrests the wicked to punish them. To the divine Providence it has seemed good to prepare in the world to come for the righteous good things, which the unrighteous shall not enjoy; and for the wicked evil things, by which the good shall not be tormented. But as for the good things of this life, and its ills, God willed that they should be common to both; so that we might not covet too eagerly the things which wicked men equally enjoy, nor shrink with cowardly fear from the ills which even good men often suffer.

There is, too, a very great difference in the purpose served by the events we call adverse and those called prosperous. The good man is neither uplifted with the good things of time, nor broken by its ills; but the evil man, because he is corrupted by this world's happiness, feels himself punished by its unhappiness. Yet often, even as things are now, God plainly interferes. For if every sin were visited here and now with visible punishment, nothing would seem to be reserved for the final judgment; on the other hand, if no sin received now a plainly divine punishment, it would be concluded that there is no divine Providence at all. And so of the good things of this life: if God did not visibly and bountifully give them to some of the people who ask for them, we would say these good things were not at His disposal; and if He gave them to all who looked for them, we would suppose that such goods were the only rewards of His service; and such service would make us not godly, but greedy. Therefore, though good and bad men both suffer, we must not suppose there is no difference between the men themselves, because there is none in what they suffer. For even though the sufferings are alike, the

sufferers are unlike; and though exposed to the same anguish, virtue and vice are not the same thing. (I,viii)

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What have Christians suffered at that terrible time which would not profit everyone who really looked at the facts? First of all, they must humbly consider the very sins which have provoked God to fill the world with such frightful disasters; for although they may be far from the excesses of wicked, immoral and ungodly men, yet Christians do not judge themselves so completely removed from all faults as to be too good to suffer for these temporal ills. After all, every man, however laudably he lives, yields in some ways to the lust of the flesh. Though he does not fall into gross viciousness . . . yet he slips into some sins, either rarely or more frequently as the sins seem less important. Besides, where can we readily find a man who holds in fit and just estimation the persons [whose offenses and impiety] have brought God to smite the earth as His predictions threatened? Where is the man who lives with them in the style in which we ought to live with them? For we often wrongly blind ourselves to the occasions of teaching and admonishing them, sometimes even of reprimanding them, either because we shrink from the labor, or are ashamed to offend them; or because we fear to lose good friendships, lest this should stand in the way of our advancement. . . .

This seems to me to be one chief reason why the good are chastised along with the wicked . . . They are punished together, not because they have spent an equally corrupt life, but because the good as well as the ungodly, though not equally with them, love this present life; while they ought to hold it cheap, so that evildoers, reprovcd and reformed by their example, might lay hold of life eternal. (I,ix)

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Let these and similar answers (if fuller and fitter answers can be found) be given to their enemies by the redeemed family of the Lord Christ, and by the pilgrim city of Christ the King. But



let this city bear in mind that among her enemies lie hidden those who are destined to be fellow-citizens, so that she may not think it a fruitless labor to bear what they inflict as enemies until they become confessors of the faith. Also, as long as she is a stranger in the world, the city of God has in her communion, and bound to her by the sacraments, some who will not eternally dwell with the saints. Some of these are not now recognized; others declare themselves, and do not hesitate to join our enemies in murmuring against God, Whose sacramental badge they were. These men you may see today thronging the churches with us, tomorrow crowding the theatres with the godless. But we have the less reason to despair of the reclamation even of such persons, if among our most declared enemies there are now some, unknown to themselves, who are destined to become our friends. Actually, these two cities are entangled together in this world, and inter-mixed until the last judgment separates them. (I,xxxv)

## *II Divine Power and Imperial Power*

If justice is taken away, what are kingdoms but great robberies? And what are robberies themselves, but little kingdoms? The band of robbers itself is made up of men; it is ruled by the authority of a prince, it is knit together by the confederation the robbers make; the booty is divided by the law agreed on. If abandoned men agree to it, this evil increases so much that it holds places, fixes headquarters, takes over cities, and subdues whole peoples, it assumes even more plainly the name of a kingdom, because real power is plainly given to it, not because it is behaving any better, but because it cannot be punished.

Once Alexander the Great seized a pirate, who gave him an apt reply: when Alexander asked him what he meant by controlling the sea against him, the man replied, "I am doing what you mean by seizing the whole earth; but because I do it with a little ship I am called a robber, while you do it with a great fleet, and are called emperor." (IV,iv)

The greatness of the Roman Empire was caused neither by chance nor by fate, according to the judgment of opinion of those who call things fortuitous which either have no cause, or causes that do not proceed from some intelligible order, and those things fatal which happen independently of the will of God and man, by the necessity of a certain order. In a word, human kingdoms are established by divine Providence. And if anyone attributes their existence to fate, because he calls the will or the power of God itself by the name of fate, let him keep his opinion, but correct his language . . . But those who think that, apart from the will of God, the stars determine what we shall do, or what good things we shall possess, or what evils we shall suffer, must be refused a hearing by all, not only by those who hold the true religion, but by those who wish to be the worshippers of any gods whatsoever, even false gods. After all, what does this opinion really amount to but this, that no god whatever is to be worshipped or prayed to? Against these, however, our argument is not intended to be directed, but against those who, in defense of those whom they think to be gods, oppose the Christian religion. (V,i)

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We are by no means compelled, either, retaining the prescience of God, to take away the freedom of the will, or, retaining the freedom of the will, to deny that He is prescient of future things, which is impious. But we embrace both, We faithfully and sincerely confess both. The former, that we may believe well; the latter, that we may live well. For he lives ill who does not believe well concerning God. Wherefore, be it far from us, in order to maintain our freedom, to deny the prescience of Him by whose help we are or shall be free. Consequently, it is not in vain that laws are enacted, and that reproaches, exhortations, and praises, and vituperations are had recourse to; for these also He foreknew, and they are of great avail, even as great as He foreknew that they would be of. Prayers, also, are of avail to procure those things which He foreknew that He would grant to those who offered them; and with justice have rewards been appointed for good deeds, and punishments for sins. For a man does not there-

fore sin because God foreknew that he would sin. Nay, it cannot be doubted that it is the man himself who sins when he does sin, because He, whose foreknowledge is infallible, foreknew not that fate, or fortune, or something else would sin, but that the man himself would sin, who, if he wills not, sins not. But if he shall not will to sin, even this did God foreknow. (V,x)

Therefore God supreme and true, with His Word and Holy Spirit (which three are one), one God omnipotent, creator and maker of every soul and of every body; by whose gift all are happy who are happy through verity and not through vanity; who made man a rational animal consisting of soul and body, who, when he sinned, neither permitted him to go unpunished, nor left him without mercy; who has given to the good and to the evil, being in common with stones, vegetable life in common with trees, sensuous life in common with brutes, intellectual life in common with angels alone; from whom is every mode, every species, every order; from whom are measure, number, weight; from whom is everything which has an existence in nature, of whatever kind it be, and of whatever value; from whom are the seeds of forms and the forms of seeds, and the motion of seeds and of forms; who gave also to flesh its origin, beauty, health, reproductive fecundity, disposition of members, and the salutary concord of its parts; who also to the irrational soul has given memory, sense, appetite, but to the rational soul, in addition to these, has given intelligence and will; who has not left, not to speak of heaven and earth, angels and men, but not even the entrails of the smallest and most contemptible animal, or the feather of a bird, or the little flower of a plant, or the leaf of a tree, without a harmony, and, as it were, a mutual peace among all its parts—that God can never be believed to have left the kingdoms of men, their dominations and servitudes, outside of the laws of His Providence. (V,xi)

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With regard to those to whom God did not purpose to give eternal life with His holy angels in His own celestial city . . . if He had also withheld from the worldly glory of such a great

empire, a reward would not have been rendered to their good arts—that is, their virtues—by which they sought to attain such great glory. For as to those who seem to do some good to receive glory from men, the Lord says, “Verily I say unto you, they have received their reward.” So also these men despised their own private affairs for the sake of the state, and for its treasury resisted avarice, consulted for the good of their country with a spirit of freedom, addicted neither to what their laws called crime nor to lust. By all these acts, as by the true way, they pressed forward to honors, power, and glory; they were honored among almost all nations; they imposed the laws of their empire upon many nations; and at this day, both in literature and history, they are glorious almost everywhere. There is no reason why they should complain against the justice of God—“they have received their reward.” (V,xv)

But the reward of the saints is far different, because even here they endured reproaches for that city of God which is hateful to the lovers of this world. That city is eternal. There none are born, for none die. There is true and full felicity, not a goddess, but a gift of God. From it we receive the pledge of faith, while on our pilgrimage we sigh for its beauty . . . There no great labor shall be expended to enrich the public treasury by suffering privations at home, for there is the common treasury of truth. And, therefore, it was not only for the sake of recompensing the citizens of Rome that her empire and glory were notably extended, but also in order that the citizens of the eternal city, during their pilgrimage here, might diligently study these examples, and see what a love they owe to the heavenly country because of life eternal, if the earthly country was so much beloved by its citizens on account of human glory. (V,xvi)

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Since things are so, we do not attribute the power of giving kingdoms and empires to any save to the true God, who gives happiness in the kingdom of heaven to the pious alone, but gives kingly power on earth both to the pious and the impious, as it may please Him, whose good pleasure is always just. For though



we have said something about the principles which guide His administration, in so far as it has seemed good to Him to explain it, nevertheless it is too much for us, and far surpasses our strength, to discuss the hidden things of men's hearts, and by a clear examination to determine the merits of various kingdoms. He, therefore, who is the one true God, who never leaves the human race without just judgment and help, gave a kingdom to the Romans when He would, and as great as He would, as He did also to the Assyrians, and even the Persians, by whom, as their own books testify, only two gods are worshipped, the one good and the other evil—to say nothing concerning the Hebrew people, who, as long as they were a kingdom, worshipped none save the true God. The same, therefore, who gave to the Persians harvests, though they did not worship the goddess Segetia, who gave the other blessings of the earth, though they did not worship the many gods which the Romans supposed to preside, each one over some particular thing, or even many of them over each thing—He gave the Persians dominion, though they worshipped none of these gods to whom the Romans believed themselves indebted for the empire. And the same is true in respect of men as well as of nations. He who gave power to Marius gave it also to Caius Caesar; he who gave it to Augustus gave it also to Nero; He who also gave it to the most benignant emperors, the Vespasians, father and son, gave it also to the cruel Domitian; and finally, to avoid the necessity of going over them all, He who gave it to the Christian Constantine gave it also to the apostate Julian, whose gifted mind was deceived by a sacrilegious and detestable curiosity, stimulated by the love of power . . . Manifestly these things are ruled and governed by the one God according as He pleases; and if His motives are hid, are they therefore unjust? (V,xxi)

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For God, lest men, who believe that He is to be worshipped with a view to eternal life, should think that no one could attain to earthly dominion also, unless he was a worshipper of demons

. . . gave the Emperor Constantine, who was not a worshipper of demons, but of the true God, such fullness of earthly gifts as no one would even dare wish for. He also granted him the honor of founding a city, a companion to the Roman empire, the daughter of Rome itself, but without any temple or image of demons. He reigned for a long time as sole emperor, and unaided held and defended the whole Roman world. In conducting and carrying on wars he was most victorious; in overthrowing tyrants he was completely successful. He died at a great age, of sickness and old age, and left his sons to succeed him in the empire. But again, lest any emperor should become a Christian in order to merit the happiness of Constantine, when everyone should be a Christian for the sake of eternal life, God took away Jovian far sooner than Julian, and permitted that Gratian should be slain by the sword of a tyrant. (V,xxv)

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[Theodosius] rejoiced more to be a member of the church than he did to be a king upon earth. The idols of the Gentiles he ordered to be overthrown . . . And what could be more admirable than his religious humility, when, compelled by certain of his intimates, he avenged the serious crime of the Thessalonians, which at the prayer of the bishops he had promised to pardon, and, laid hold of by the discipline of the church, did penance in such a way that the sight of his imperial loftiness prostrated made the people who were interceding for him weep more than the consciousness of offense had made them fear it when he was enraged? These and other similar good works, which it would take too long to tell, he carried with him from this world of time, where the greatest human nobility and loftiness are but vapor. The reward for what he did is eternal happiness, of which God is the giver . . . But all other blessings and privileges of this life . . . He lavishes on the good and bad alike. And among these blessings is also to be reckoned the possession of an empire, whose extent He regulates according to the requirements of His providential government at various times. (V,xxvi)

## *IV The Two Cities*

We have already stated in the preceding books that God, desiring not only that the human race might be able by their similarity of nature to associate with one another, but also that they might be bound together in harmony and peace by the ties of relationship, was pleased to derive all men from one individual, and created man with such a nature that the members of the race should not have died, had not the two first (of whom one was created out of nothing, and the other out of him) merited this by their disobedience; for by them so great a sin was committed, that by it human nature was altered for the worse, and was transmitted also to their posterity, liable to sin and subject to death. And the kingdom of death so reigned over men, that the deserved penalty of sin would have hurled all headlong even into the second death, of which there is no end, had not the undeserved grace of God saved some from it. And thus it has happened that though there are very many and great nations all over the earth, whose rites and customs, speech, arms and dress, are distinguished by marked differences, yet there are no more than two kinds of human society, which we may justly call two cities, according to the language of our Scriptures. The one consists of those who wish to live after the flesh, the other of those who wish to live after the spirit; and when they each achieve what they wish, they live in peace, each in its own way. (XIV,i)

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Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self. The former glories in itself, the latter in the Lord. One seeks glory from men; but the greatest glory of the other is God, the witness of conscience. One lifts up its head in its own glory; the other says to its God, "Thou art my glory, and the lifter up of mine head." In one, the princes and the nations it subdues are ruled by the love of ruling; in the other, the princes and the

subjects serve one another in love; the latter obeying, while the former take thought for all. One delights in its own strength, represented in the persons of its rulers; the other says to its God, "I will love Thee, O Lord, my strength." Therefore the wise men of one city, living according to man, have sought for profit to their own bodies or souls, or both, and those who have known God "glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful." . . . But in the other city there is no human wisdom, but only godliness, which offers proper worship to the true God, and looks for its reward in the society of the saints, of holy angels as well as holy men, so that God may be all in all. (XIV,xxviii)

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We have divided [the human race] into two parts, one consisting of those who live according to man, the other of those who live according to God. And these we also mystically call the two cities, or the communities of men, of which one is predestined to reign eternally with God, and the other to suffer eternal punishment with the devil . . . For this whole time, or world-age, in which the dying give place and those who are born follow, is the career of these two cities. Of the two first parents of the human race, Cain was the first-born, and belonged to the city of man; after him was born Abel, who belonged to the city of God. For as in the individual the truth of the apostle's statement can be seen, "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterward that which is spiritual," thus it happens that each man, derived from a condemned stock, is first of all born of Adam evil and carnal, and becomes good and spiritual only afterward, when he is grafted into Christ by regeneration: so was it in the human race as a whole. When these two cities began to run their course by a series of deaths and births the citizen of this world was the first-born, and after him the stranger in this world, the citizen of the city of God, predestined by grace, elected by grace, by grace a stranger below, and by grace a citizen above.

. . . Every wicked man will not be good, but no one will be good who was not first of all wicked: but the sooner anyone becomes a good man, the more speedily he receives this title and



abolishes the old name in the new. Accordingly it is recorded of Cain that he built a city, but Abel, being a sojourner, built none. For the city of the saints is above, although here below it begets citizens, in whom it remains till the time of its reign arrives, when it shall gather together all in the day of the resurrection. (XV,i)

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One part of the earthly city became an image of the heavenly city, not having any significance of its own, but signifying another city, and therefore serving, or "being in bondage." For it was founded, not for its own sake but to prefigure another city . . . In the earthly city, then, we find two things, its own obvious presence, and its symbolic presentation of the heavenly city. Citizens are begotten to the earthly city by nature corrupted by sin, but to the heavenly city by grace freeing nature from sin; whence the former are called "vessels of wrath," the latter "vessels of mercy." (XV,ii)

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The earthly city, which will not be everlasting (for it will no longer be a city when it has been committed to the extreme penalty) has its good in this world, and rejoices in it as far as it can. But as this is not a good which can prevent its devotees from all kinds of distresses, this city is often divided against itself by litigations, wars, quarrels, and such victories as are either life-destroying or short-lived. Each part of it that arms against another part seeks to triumph over everyone else, though itself in bondage to vice. If, when it has conquered, it is inflated with pride, its victory is life-destroying; but, if it turns its thoughts to our common mortal casualties, and is rather anxious about the disasters that may befall it than elated with the successes already achieved, this victory, though of a higher kind, is still only short-lived; for it cannot rule forever over those whom it has successfully conquered. But the things this city desires cannot justly be said to be evil, for it is itself, in its own way, better than every other human good. For it desires earthly peace for the sake of en-

joying earthly goods, and it makes war in order to attain this peace; since, if it has conquered, and no one is left to resist it, it enjoys a peace which it did not have while there were opposing parties who fought for the enjoyment of the things which were too small to satisfy both. This peace is purchased by toilsome wars; it is obtained by what they call a glorious victory. Now, when victory remains with the party which had the juster cause, who hesitates to congratulate the victor, and call it a desirable peace? These things, then, are good things, and without doubt the gifts of God. But if they neglect the better things of the heavenly city, which are secured by eternal victory and peace never-ending, and so inordinately covet these present good things that they believe them to be the only desirable things, or love them better than those things which are believed to be better—if this is so, then misery will certainly follow and keep increasing. (XV,iv)

Thus the founder of the earthly city was a fratricide. Overcome with envy, he slew his own brother, a citizen of the eternal city, and a sojourner on earth. So that we cannot be surprised that this first specimen, or as the Greeks say, archetype of crime, should, long afterwards, find a corresponding crime at the foundation of that city which was destined to reign over so many nations, and be the head of this earthly city of which we speak. For of that city also, as one of their poets [Lucan] has mentioned, "the first walls were stained with a brother's blood"; as Roman history records, Remus was slain by his brother Romulus. There is really no difference between the foundation of this city and of the earthly city, unless that Romulus and Remus were both citizens of the earthly city. Both desired to have the glory of founding the Roman republic, but both could not have as much glory as if only one claimed it; for the one who wanted the glory of ruling would certainly rule less if his power were shared by a living consort. In order, therefore, that he might enjoy glory, his consort was removed; and by this crime the empire was made larger indeed, but inferior, while otherwise it would have been less, but better . . .

The quarrel between Romulus and Remus, then, shows how

the earthly city is divided against itself; what fell out between Cain and Abel illustrates the hatred between the two cities, that of God and that of men. The wicked war with each other; the good also war with the wicked. But with the good, good men, or at least perfectly good men, cannot war; though while only advancing towards perfection, they war to the extent that every good man resists others in those points in which he resists himself. (XV,v)

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Since Adam was the father of both lines, the line belonging to the earthly and that belonging to the heavenly city, when Abel was slain, and by his death displayed a marvelous mystery, there were from that time on two lines proceeding from two fathers, Cain and Seth [his brother]; and in their recorded sons the tokens of these two cities began to appear more distinctly. For Cain begat Enoch, in whose name he built a city, an earthly one, which was not ill at ease in this world, but rested satisfied with its temporal peace and happiness. Cain means "possession"; Enoch means "dedication"; for the earthly city is dedicated in this world in which it is built, for in this world it finds the end it aims towards. Seth means "resurrection" and Enos his son means "man"; not like "Adam" which also signifies man, but is used in Hebrew indifferently for man and woman . . .

Just as Cain [possession], the founder of the earthly city, and his son Enoch [dedication], in whose name it was founded, show that this city is earthly both in its beginning and in its end—a city in which nothing more is hoped for than can be seen in this world—so Seth means resurrection. (XV,xvii)

## *V The Theory of Peace*

The peace of the body then consists in the duly proportioned arrangement of its parts. The peace of the irrational soul is the harmonious repose of the appetities, and that of the rational soul the harmony of knowledge and action. The peace of body and soul is the well-ordered and harmonious life and

health of the living creature. Peace between man and God is the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law. Peace between man and man is well-ordered concord. Domestic peace is the well-ordered concord between those of the family who rule and those who obey. Civil peace is a similar concord among the citizens. The peace of the celestial city is the perfectly ordered and harmonious enjoyment of God, and of one another in God. The peace of all things is the tranquillity of order. Order is the distribution which allots things equal and unequal, each to its own place. And hence, though the miserable, in so far as they are such, do certainly not enjoy peace, but are severed from that tranquillity of order in which there is no disturbance, nevertheless, inasmuch as they are deservedly and justly miserable, they are by their very misery connected with order . . .

As, then, there may be life without pain, while there cannot be pain without some kind of life, so there may be peace without war, but there cannot be war without some kind of peace, because war supposes the existence of some natures to wage it, and these natures cannot exist without peace of one kind or another. And therefore there is a nature in which evil does not or even cannot exist; but there cannot be a nature in which there is no good. Hence not even the nature of the devil himself is evil, in so far as it is nature, but it was made evil by being perverted. (XIX, xiii)

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The whole use, then, of things temporal has a reference to this result of earthly peace in the earthly community, while in the city of God it is connected with eternal peace. And therefore, if we were irrational animals, we should desire nothing beyond the proper arrangement of the parts of the body and the satisfaction of the appetites—nothing, therefore, but bodily comfort and abundance of pleasures, that the peace of the body might contribute to the peace of the soul. For if bodily peace is lacking a bar is put to the peace even of the irrational soul, since it cannot obtain the gratification of its appetites. And these two together help out the mutual peace of soul and body, the peace



of harmonious life and health. For as animals, by shunning pain, show that they love bodily peace, and, by pursuing pleasure to gratify their appetites, show that they love peace of soul, so their shrinking from death is a sufficient indication of their intense love of that peace which binds soul and body in close alliance. But, as man has a rational soul, he subordinates all this which he has in common with the beasts to the peace of his rational soul, so that his intellect may have free play and may regulate his actions, and that he may thus enjoy the well-ordered harmony of knowledge and action which constitutes, as we have said, the peace of the rational soul. And for this purpose he must desire to be neither molested by pain, nor disturbed by desire, nor extinguished by death, that he may arrive at some useful knowledge by which he may regulate his life and manners. But, owing to the liability of the human mind to fall into mistakes, this very pursuit of knowledge may be a snare to him unless he has a divine Master, whom he may obey without misgiving, and who may at the same time give him such help as to preserve his own freedom. And because, so long as he is in this mortal body, he is a stranger to God, he walks by faith, not by sight; and he therefore refers all peace, bodily or spiritual or both, to that peace which mortal man has with the immortal God, so that he exhibits the well-ordered obedience of faith to eternal law. (XIX, xiv)



The things necessary for this mortal life are used by both kinds of men and families alike, but each has its own peculiar and widely different aim in using them. The earthly city, which does not live by faith, seeks an earthly peace, and the end it proposes, in the well-ordered concord of civil obedience and rule, is the combination of men's wills to attain the things helpful to this life. The heavenly city, or rather the part of it which sojourns on earth and lives by faith, makes use of this peace only because it must, until this mortal condition which makes it necessary passes away. Consequently, so long as it lives like a captive and a stranger in the earthly city, though it has already received the

promise of redemption, and the gift of the spirit as its pledge, it does not hesitate to obey the laws of the earthly city, which administer whatever is necessary to maintain this mortal life. Thus, as this life is common to both cities, so there is harmony between them regarding what belongs to it. But, as the earthly city has had some philosophers whose doctrine is condemned by divine teaching, and who—deceived either by their own theories or by demons—supposed that many gods must be invited to take an interest in human affairs, and assigned to each a separate function and a separate department . . . it has come to pass that the two cities could not have common laws of religion, and that the heavenly city has been compelled in this matter to dissent, and to become obnoxious to those who think differently, and to stand the brunt of their anger and hatred and persecution, except in so far as the minds of their enemies have been alarmed by the multitude of the Christians and quelled by the obvious protection of God accorded to them. This heavenly city, then, while it sojourns on earth, calls citizens out of all nations, and gathers together a society of pilgrims of all languages; not scrupling about diversities in the manners, laws, and institutions which secure and maintain earthly peace, but recognizing that, however various these are, they all tend to the same end of earthly peace. It therefore does not rescind and abolish these diversities, but even preserves and adopts them, so long as no hindrance to the worship of the one supreme and true God is thus introduced. (XIX,xvii)

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But if we [assume] that a people is an assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of their love, then, in order to discover the character of any people, we have only to observe what they love. Yet whatever it loves, if only it is an assemblage of reasonable beings and not of beasts, and is bound together by an agreement as to the objects of love, it is reasonably called a people; and it will be a superior people in proportion as it is bound together by higher interests, inferior in proportion as it is bound together by lower. According to this definition of ours, the Roman people is a people,

and its weal is without doubt a commonwealth or republic. But what its tastes were in its early and subsequent days, and how it declined into sanguinary seditions and then to social and civil wars, and so burst asunder or rotted off the bond of concord in which the health of a people consists, history shows, and in the preceding books I have related at large. And yet I would not on this account say either that it was not a people, or that its administration was not a republic, so long as there remained an assemblage of reasonable beings bound together by a common agreement as to the objects of love. But what I say of this people and of this republic I must be understood to think and say of the Athenians or any Greek state, of the Egyptians, of the early Assyrian Babylon, and of every other nation, great or small, which had a public government. For, in general, the city of the ungodly, which did not obey the command of God that it should offer no sacrifice save to Him alone, and which, therefore, could not give to the soul its proper command over the body, nor to the reason its just authority over the vices, is void of true justice. (XIX,xxiv)

## *VI The Ages of the World*

There [in heaven] shall be the great Sabbath which has no evening, which God celebrated among His first works, as it is written, "And God rested on the seventh day from all His works which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it, because in it He had rested from all His work which God began to make." For we shall ourselves be the seventh day, when we shall be filled and replenished with God's blessing and sanctification . . .

This Sabbath shall appear still more clearly if we count the ages as days, in accordance with the periods of time defined in Scripture, for that period will be found to be the seventh. The first age, as the first day, extends from Adam to the deluge; the second from the deluge to Abraham, equalling the first, not in length of time, but in the number of generations, there being ten in each. From Abraham to the advent of Christ there are, as the evangelist Matthew calculates, three periods, in each of which

are fourteen generations—one period from Abraham to David, a second from David to the captivity, a third from the captivity to the birth of Christ in the flesh. There are thus five ages in all. The sixth is now passing, and cannot be measured by any number of generations, as it has been said, “It is not for you to know the times, which the Father hath put in His own power.” After this period God shall rest as on the seventh day, when He shall give us (who shall be the seventh day) rest in Himself. But there is not now space to treat of these ages; suffice it to say that the seventh shall be our Sabbath, which shall be brought to a close, not by an evening, but by the Lord’s day, as an eighth and eternal day, consecrated by the resurrection of Christ, and prefiguring the eternal repose not only of the spirit, but also of the body. There we shall rest and see, see and love, love and praise. This is what shall be in the end without end. For what other end do we propose to ourselves than to attain to the kingdom of which there is no end?

I think I have now, by God’s help, discharged my obligation in writing this large work. Let those who think I have said too little, those who think I have said too much, forgive me; and let those who think I have said just enough give thanks, not to me, but rather join me in giving thanks to God. Amen. (XXII,xxx)



# 4

## *Jean Bodin*

(1530-96)

The 1100 years following St. Augustine, while rich in historiography, were notably poor in philosophy of history. Several reasons can be given, but the chief one is probably that, granted medieval presuppositions, St. Augustine's historical framework was difficult to improve on. St. Thomas Aquinas profoundly modified Augustinian philosophy, but as he did not deal directly with history, and as no thinker of equal stature emerged to work with its problems, the old pattern remained.

This began to change with the Renaissance. The "rediscovery of the world and of man" suggested new outlooks in historiography as elsewhere. Machiavelli interpreted politics in an original way by wholly ignoring both Christian ethics and Divine guidance. This horrified many people, particularly northerners, because such a method, while usual in practice, was not customarily defended in theory. But Machiavelli was not at all radical in his total approach: the *Discourses on Livy*, his most philosophical book, derives most of its theory from the Polybian cycles. Most of the Italian thinkers declared war on the Middle Ages, whose

positive achievements they systematically undervalued. To do so they did not develop new ideas so much as they switched their authorities from the Bible and Fathers to the classics and pre-Christian tradition, which they often accepted enthusiastically on faith in much the same way the Fathers accepted the Bible, although not for the same reasons.

This involved a new historical scheme: the later Greeks and Romans ordinarily did not believe in a Divine plan for all men, and much less in miraculous intervention as a form of historical explanation. The Renaissance thinkers did not wish to deny this position, but usually they did not care to deny Christian Providence as an explanation either. This conflict forced some limitations on their interpretation of the past: hence the tendency was to work on the principles of historical writing rather than on those of historical thinking. The problem of ultimate causation—fate, Providence, free will—usually was left either unsolved or ambiguous, and as a compromise history was stressed as a field whose usefulness was undeniable but whose rank in knowledge was less specified than praised as "*Magistra vitae*." Did studying history make people more moral? Machiavelli hardly thought so. Did it invariably show that good men flourished and bad men suffered? Not quite. However, reading it might make one more successful, and the emulation of heroes became a Renaissance fashion. But the figures to be emulated were those of either the immediate or the very distant past, almost never those of the intervening period. From this time on, the Greeks and Romans became the ordinary fare in discussions of the historical process. The light-darkness contrast of the Bible and St. Augustine was applied in a new way, and the children of darkness, the Outsiders, turned out to be the very people St. Augustine had been defending.

The leaders of the northern Renaissance eagerly copied the Italians' interest in the classics, but used them as weapons of attack, particularly during the Reformation, whose prophets often or even usually defended national differences in the name of religious ones. Lutheran historians felt free to attack the Middle Ages, and also classical times, but hardly Biblical ones. Thus

the Italian attitude that Christian history was inferior to classical history changed: the Germans were not descended from Romans, but felt their Christianity was much more sincere than that of the profligate Italians, and mined historical records to prove it.

The French, who did not have to defend a new religion, combined elements of the Italian and German attitudes: classical history was good, but so was national history, which indeed proved French superiority. Biblical history was a problem, because it could not be investigated like secular history, but had to be accepted on faith; and the trouble was that faith did not work anywhere else in historical investigation. So they sharpened their tools and turned them elsewhere. One such tool was the "*Ars Historica*," a sort of historical handbook that began in Italy and became very popular in the north. It explained the principles of historiography, with particular reference to its "utility, truth and dignity," and plagiarized freely the recognized ancient authors. These "*Artes*" were neither original nor exciting, but they provided the background out of which grew Bodin's *Method for the Easy Understanding of History*.

Bodin was, even by Renaissance standards, an unusually widely read man. For a time he studied for the priesthood, left it for the law, and entered a career of civil service. The *Method* shows not only an enormous familiarity with the classics, but with medieval and modern writing as well. He knew a good deal about contemporary science, and had done some experiments of his own. In addition he was, or later became, an authority on political theory, economics and demonology. He knew the books of the recent explorers and historians, as well as those of Lutherans and Calvinists, and his enthusiasm for the latter even caused the *Method* to be listed for a while on the Index of Prohibited Books.

But if the gaps in his information are not easy to see, those in his interests are. While he was fond of the Old Testament, he very seldom quotes the New Testament, St. Augustine, medieval or contemporary Catholics. The God who rules his history is less an acting Grace than a personal but remote power that gives

the lie to the chance and fate theories of the Epicureans and Stoics. As a *Politique* or moderate, he belongs less in the tradition of either the Calvinists or Catholics than in that of Montaigne. The *Method*, published in 1566, just after the outbreak of the French religious wars, stresses this moderate position. It is not surprising that like Hobbes, writing during another civil war a century later, he recommended strong government, both in the *Method* and in the later and more authoritative *Republic*.

The argument of the *Method* is based on three relationships: the relation between history and law; between human action and natural environment; and between macrocosm and microcosm. The first concerns the reasons for studying history. Historical knowledge is the most important kind of knowledge there is. It affords both pleasure and profit, shows many examples for emulation and avoidance, and is a storehouse of excellent maxims. All this is very much in the manner of the later Greeks: it is History, rather than the Lord in Judgment, before whose stern gaze even the most hardened villains should cringe.

But history basically is worth studying in order to uncover universal law. The trouble is that "law" is never defined very clearly. It seems to mean both jurisprudence in its widest sense—Bodin was a lawyer by profession—and an order built into the universe, a Natural Law men must follow whether they like it or not. Natural Law seems to be related to the golden mean, the moderation between extremes. Whatever is moderate, sensible, balanced is natural. This law can best be found by studying not science but history, since historical events, like those of science, tend to recur in patterns; but unlike science they deal directly with humanity, which is more godlike than anything else in nature. These patterns of recurrence involve an element of prediction, although Bodin carefully avoids any predicting himself. His idea is to do for Polybius, his model, what Polybius had done for his predecessors: to carry "ecumenical" history one step further and apply it to the whole universe. Also like Polybius, he ends with the present: Bodin will have no part of eschatology.

There are also several reasons for *not* studying the past. Where Catholic belief to St. Augustine was necessary for proper histori-



cal knowledge, to Bodin historical knowledge does not prove Christianity, but it *is* necessary for a proper knowledge of how God works; and this knowledge ultimately leads to contemplation. The system works both upward, from man through the family and state to God, and downward, through analysis which cuts the whole universe into parts. Orthodoxy he omits; divine history is for theologians. This does not indicate he thinks religion is unimportant so much as that in 1566 it was not a safe subject for a rather skeptical French moderate to write about. Bodin also disliked the two interpretations of history most prevalent in his time: the theory of a past Golden Age, with its corollary of subsequent degeneration, which he ridicules; and the allegorization of the four monarchies of the Book of Daniel, which he detests, partly because it makes no sense and partly because of its German flavor. He has no use either for a law of automatic progress or for one of endless decline.

The second principle, which is a development of the first, concerns the laws according to which the universe operates. A Pythagorean theory of numbers suggests a principle according to which the duration of empires can be calculated, but this does not imply determinism so much as Providence; human history can be no more haphazard than natural history, and, therefore, should be predictable according to the same principles. How to predict it? Astrology offers many suggestions, and while Bodin is careful to say that stars and planets do not exercise ultimate control, they do influence human behavior. Geography can also help: the northern hemisphere, following Ptolemy, is divided into three regions, and the people of each region have a given set of medical characteristics: in the north phlegm predominates, in the center yellow bile ("chole"), and among southerners black bile ("melancholia"), according to the four-humor theory of Hippocrates and Galen. Thus each part has a tendency toward one set of built-in virtues and vices, which agree with the virtues associated with the planets that preside over each region.

The third principle, related to both the others, is that a student of history cannot deal with mankind without including the structure of the universe. The universe is a great unit, a macrocosm,

and men and societies are microcosms, each of which reflects the balanced structure of the whole. Other Renaissance thinkers had handled this argument on a philosophical or theological plane: Bodin uses it on a political one. Society begins not with a mythical Golden Age but with the family, which, as it grows into larger units, begins to quarrel over property. Ultimately kingship develops, and then declines into tyranny, which is itself overcome, more or less according to the rules of Aristotle and Polybius. These quarrels and divisions in society, however, are not wholly a bad thing, because they bring out the differences between groups, and each state rests on the association between groups as parts of the microcosm. Since each set of regional characteristics has its good points, they are all necessary to the balance of the macrocosm: the north serves as the arms, the south the brain, and the center the power that directs both. Within each group, by a modification of the argument in Plato's *Republic*, learned men are the brain, officials the heart, and manual workers and soldiers the liver. Empires rise and fall periodically as vices press on virtues, and no people (save those mentioned in the Bible) is exempt from a universal law of growth and decay. In the classical world this would have left history without goal or real meaning, but to Bodin the regularity of universal laws demonstrates God's Providence, even though, in the later scholastic manner, He may contravene these laws if He chooses. As the world is linked to the heavenly bodies, so the nations are linked in the world and individuals in the nations. Thus in the relationship of parts to the whole, society imitates nature and achieves harmony through ordered dissimilarity. But where a certain amount of this dialectic is a good thing, quarrels between nations are emphatically not: national pride is the chief single obstacle to natural harmony in the *Respublica Mundana*, the great republic of the world. Bodin devotes some of his most sarcastic pages to absurd German pretensions of superiority.

Bodin's argument is not difficult to pull apart, especially as today we do not share his belief in astrology, sorcery, mystical numbers or the Four Humors. The cycle theory is not really worked out, nor is it tied very closely to the three-zone theory.

The fact that all people in the Bible are exempted from his laws makes nonsense of the laws themselves. His sources—for very few of the points he makes are original—are too full of contradictory ideas, and Renaissance writers simply did not have the technique for putting them together into a digestible system. Bodin was a brilliant and immensely widely read young man, but the book is a tour de force, not a sound and mature analysis.

And yet the *Method* is the first attempt since classical times to formulate a really thorough review of the reasons for studying history. While it is crude, a priori, pre-scientific, neither checked as Thucydides would have done nor “explained by faith” in the Augustinian manner, still it is based on a perfectly sound deduction: that in the confusion of history there must be a substratum of natural fact according to which changes can be measured. This implies a severe limitation of freedom, which for Bodin is not a particular problem: the chief end of society is not liberty, but living well. Man, partly subordinate to the natural world, is much less the master of his own fate than he appeared in the early Renaissance. For example, dwellers in extreme climates *cannot* show moderation. This does not seem to matter greatly: climate, environment and the stars are only the tools through which God works to help man achieve, not his freedom but his full potentialities. These potentialities are not discussed, but seem to be fullest in the area of France.

Does the action of God through nature make for progress? Bodin is not clear: he is too good a Polybian to believe in Progress in its later sense, and indeed the very existence of the Middle Ages made nonsense of any theory of steady development. In addition, too much stress on advance would give the present and future more emphasis over the past than Bodin feels they deserve. Nature is an inexhaustible treasury, to which each age must make its own contribution, and from which each draws what it can use best. He is, though, the first writer to indicate what a privileged position antiquity held with his contemporaries and to suggest that more moderation in its praise would be a good thing. He knows his own epoch has a great deal to offer,

even by comparison with the most brilliant ages of the classic past.

The *Method* is in many ways a characteristic Renaissance book. It is crammed with undigested Platonic, Aristotelian, Pythagorean, Jewish, and contemporary material, mixed with cosmography, medicine and occult lore. The authorities are cited in troops large enough to silence any criticism, which is also typical of the Renaissance. But the way they are used is medieval—with one difference. The medieval method of argument was to set authorities against each other according to fixed rules of Aristotelian logic, supplemented by faith-knowledge. Bodin cites the authorities, chooses and discards, but not according to any rigorous principle at all. He says he wishes to follow nature, but never makes it clear which of the numerous Renaissance uses of “nature” he has in mind. The final result is a potpourri synthesis, leading upward to God and demonstrating His Providence in all matters, but laboriously constructed on a foundation that will not bear its weight. Faith-knowledge is carefully included, but really does not fit anywhere. The book as a whole is a combination of shrewdness and credulity, wealth of learning and poverty of analytical technique, so often met with in Renaissance times.

But the *Method* transcends a “typical” Renaissance point of view. While it offers very little that is original, the way some of the ideas are put together suggests some new starting points. Bodin cleared the ground of some hoary explanations of history, and while he did not come out for progress, he made it possible for others to do so. While his reasons for studying history are ordinary sixteenth-century ones, three unusual points are made: the reasons for not studying history; the other fields (psychology, astrology, geography, law) that are *necessarily* combined with it; and above all the unchanging layer of natural fact.

Bodin also points forward: although his naturalism is more often than not accepted in an Augustinian way, i.e. because it is supported by eminent authorities, it introduces a kind of evidence that a less authoritarian age could use in a quite un-Augustinian



way. Like Herder, he insists that the development of *all* peoples ought to be studied, even Americans; this broke with the more usual humanist view that all worthwhile lessons could be learned from Greeks and Romans. His interest in myths and language-origins looks toward Vico. His brief suggestion of an Oriental-Mediterranean-Northern triad of civilizations, as well as his idea of differences which themselves contribute to harmony, points to Hegel. While not all of these successors had read Bodin, it is evident that such ideas were in the air, and although today his solutions to historical problems are not of great value, his formulations of them indicated the work to be done by these and other successors.

## READINGS <sup>1</sup>

### *I The Reasons for Studying History*

In history the best part of universal law lies hidden; and what is of great weight and importance for the best appraisal of legislation—the customs of the peoples, and the beginnings, growth, conditions, changes, and decline of all states—are obtained from it. The chief subject matter of this *Method* consists of these facts, since no rewards of history are more ample than those usually gathered about the governmental form of states . . .

Although history has many eulogists, who have adorned her with honest and fitting praises, yet among them no one has commended her more truthfully and appropriately than the man who called her the “master of life.” This designation, which implies all the adornments of all virtues and disciplines, means that the whole life of man ought to be shaped accordingly to the sacred laws of history . . . From [past days] not only are present-day affairs readily interpreted but also future events are inferred, and we may acquire reliable maxims for what we should seek and

<sup>1</sup> All references in this section are to Jean Bodin, *Method for the Easy Comprehension of History*, trans. Beatrice Reynolds (New York: Columbia University Press, 1945). Reprinted by permission of the Columbia University Press.

avoid. So it seemed to me remarkable that no one has compared famous histories of our forbears with each other and with the account of deeds done by the ancients . . .

This, then, is the greatest benefit of historical books, that some men, at least, can be incited to virtue and others can be frightened away from vice. (pages 8-9)

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But of what value is it that this branch of learning is the inventor and preserver of all the arts, and chiefly of those which depend upon action? Whatever our elders observe and acquire by long experience is committed to the treasure-house of history; then men of a later age join the observations of the past reflections for the future and compare the causes of obscure things, studying the efficient causes and the ends of each as if they were placed beneath their eyes. Moreover, what can be for the greater glory of immortal God or more really advantageous than the fact that sacred history is the means of inculcating piety to God, reverence to parents, charity to individuals, and justice to all? . . .

To ease is added the pleasure that we take in following the narrative of virtue's triumphs . . . What is more delightful than to contemplate through history the deeds of our ancestors placed before our eyes, as in a picture? What more enjoyable than to envisage their resources, their troops, and the very clash of their lines of battle? . . . I go on to the utility. How great it is, not only in the most accurate narratives, but even in those where only a likeness to actual fact and some glimmer of truth shines, I shall make plain . . . There is no example more recent or more famous than that of Selim, prince of the Turks. Although his ancestors had always avoided history on the ground that it is false, he himself first had the deeds of Caesar translated into the vernacular, and by imitating that general in a short time he joined a great part of Asia Minor and of Africa to the dominion of his ancestors. Moreover, what drove Caesar himself to such valor, if not emulation of Alexander? When he read of his victories, he wept copious tears because at an age when his hero had conquered all the world he himself had not yet done anything. Like-

wise, what was the cause of so many victories for Alexander, if not the valor of Achilles? . . . [What] brought Emperor Charles V to such glory, if not emulation of Louis XI, king of the French, from the book of Comines? . . . What sort of reward must we hope from history? Since this teaches us clearly not only the arts necessary for living but also those objectives which at all costs must be sought, what things to avoid, what is base, what is honorable, which laws are most desirable, which state is the best, and the happiest kind of life. Finally, since if we put history aside the cult of God, religion and prophecies grow obsolete with the passing of centuries; therefore, on account of the inexpressible advantage of such knowledge, I have been led to write this book, for I noticed that while there was a great abundance and supply of historians, yet no one has explained the art and method of the subject. Many recklessly and incoherently confuse the accounts, and none derives any lessons therefrom. (10-14)

## *II Classification of History and Historians*

Of history, that is, the true narration of things, there are three kinds: human, natural, and divine. The first concerns man, the second, nature; the third, the Father of nature . . . [Thus] it is probable, inevitable, and holy—and the same number of virtues are associated with it, that is to say, prudence, knowledge, and faith. The first virtue distinguishes base from honorable; the second, true from false; the third, piety from impiety . . . From these three virtues together is created true wisdom, man's supreme and final good . . .

Therefore it would follow that we should turn our first inquiries to the history of divine things. But since in man mother nature engenders first the desire for self-preservation, then little by little due to awe of Nature's workings drives him to investigate their causes, and since from these interests she draws him to an understanding of the very Arbiter of all things—for this reason it seems that we must begin with the subject of human affairs as soon as there shall have dawned in the minds of children perceptions of God, the All-Highest, not only probable but also in-

evitable for belief. So it shall come about that from thinking first about ourselves, then about our family, then about our society we are left to examine nature and finally to the true history of Immortal God, that is, to contemplation. . . .

Since eminent and learned men have expressed concisely in written works this threefold classification of the subject, I have proposed to myself just this—that I may establish an order and a manner of reading these and of judging carefully between them, especially in the history of human affairs . . . But because human history mostly flows from the will of mankind, which ever vacillates and has no objective, nay, rather, each day new laws, new customs, new institutions, new manners confront us—so, in general, human actions are invariably involved in new errors unless they are directed by nature as leader. That is, they err if they are not directed by correct reasoning or if, when the latter has deteriorated, they are not guided without the help of secondary causes by that divine foresight which is closer to the principle of their origin . . .

Since for acquiring prudence nothing is more important or more essential than history, because episodes in human life sometimes recur as in a circle, repeating themselves, we judge that attention must be given to this subject, especially by those who do not lead a secluded life, but are in touch with assemblies and societies of human beings. So of the three types of history, let us for the moment abandon the divine to the theologians, the natural to the philosophers, while we concentrate long and intently upon human actions and the rules governing them. (15-17)

### *III The Relation Between Climate and History*

Since, however, the disagreement among historians is such that some not only disagree with others but even contradict themselves, either from zeal or anger or error, we must make some generalizations as to the nature of all peoples or at least of the better known, so that we can test the truth of histories by just standards . . . Let us seek characteristics drawn, not from the institutions of men but from nature, which are



stable, and are never changed unless by great force or long training, and even if they have been altered, nevertheless, eventually return to their pristine character. About this body of knowledge the ancients could write nothing, since they were ignorant of regions and places which not so long ago were opened up; instead, each man advanced as far as he could by inference of probabilities.

. . . I have, however, a firm conviction that astrological regions and celestial bodies do not have power to exercise ultimate control (a belief wrong even to entertain), yet men are so much influenced by them that they cannot overcome the law of nature except through divine aid or their own continued self-discipline . . . The ancients report, therefore, almost unanimously that the men living to the north are larger and stronger in body; to the south, on the other hand, they are weaker, yet they exceed the others in ability. Of course this was learned by long-continued experience, because observation of the fact is easy; but how far the power of the north and of the south goes, what defines the east and the west, or what ought to be thought about the traits and the innate nature of each, it is difficult to say.

. . . Let us establish four quarters of this hemisphere: the southern in the circle of the equator, the northern on the vertex of the pole, the eastern in the Moluccas, the western in the isles of the Hesperides . . . For the present it suffices to place the meeting of the east and the west in America, because this region is removed by boundless distances from India and Africa. Then the dividing line between north and south is the equator, which reaches around the world. In turn, the middle of the northern hemisphere on this side of the equator is marked by the 45th parallel of latitude, so that whatever lies above towards the pole is classified as northern, and the rest, lying below, as southern. (85-87)

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Let us therefore adopt this theory, that all who inhabit the area from the 45th parallel to the 75th toward the north grow increasingly warmer within, while the southerners, since they have more

warmth from the sun, have less from themselves. In winter the heat is collected within, but in summer it flows out, whereby it happens that in winter we are more animated and robust, in summer more languid.

. . . The greatest empires always have spread southward—rarely from the south toward the north. The Assyrians defeated the Chaldeans; the Medes, the Assyrians; the Greeks, the Persians; the Parthians, the Greeks; the Romans, the Carthaginians; the Goths, the Romans; the Turks, the Arabs; and the Tartars, the Turks. The Romans, on the contrary, were unwilling to advance beyond the Danube . . . The French often suffered serious defeat at the hands of the English in France itself and almost lost their territory; they could never have penetrated into England, had they not been invited by the inhabitants. The English, on the other hand, were frequently overwhelmed by the Scots, and although they fought for control for more than 1200 years, yet they could not drive the Scots from a small part of the island, even when in resources and numbers they were as much superior to the Scots as they were inferior to the French. (92-93)

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Those who occupy the middle region are impatient of both cold and heat, since the mean contends with each extreme; [further Spain, France, Italy, upper Germany to the Main, the Balkans and much of Asia]. Southerners nearer to us, then, are Spanish, Sicilians [Arabs, Persians, Indians] and the Americans who inhabit Florida . . . The northerners, in turn are those who inhabit the land from the 50th parallel to the 60th: [Britain, Ireland, Denmark, part of Gothland, Lower Germany from the Main and the Bug river even to farthest Scythia and Tartary] . . . The Mediterranean peoples, then, as far as concerns the form of the body, are cold, dry, hard, bald, weak, swarthy, small in body, crisp of hair, black-eyed and clear-voiced. The Baltic peoples, on the other hand, are warm, wet, hairy, robust, white, large-bodied, soft-fleshed, with scanty beards, bluish grey eyes, and deep voices. Those who live between the two show moderation in all respects.

. . . We have given enough about the form of body from which the habits of mind are inferred and a correct judgment of history is developed. Since the body and the mind are swayed in opposite directions, the more strength the latter has, the less has the former; and the more effective a man is intellectually, the less strength of body he has, provided the senses are functioning. It is plain, therefore, that the southerners excel in intellect, the Scythians in body.<sup>2</sup>

. . . [Aristotle] believed that those to whom [God] allotted moderate strength excelled the remainder in humanity and justice, a trait which in *Questions* he attributed to a temperate climate. "Why," said he, "are people who suffer from too great cold or heat uncivilized?" Is it because the best climate makes the best customs? In that case why do all historians praise so highly the innocence and justice of the Scythians and execrate the customs of the southerners? Here I seek a decision in history, in order that we may not have disagreement between philosophers and historians. (96-99)

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Now, since the mind does excel the body and greater force of genius exists in the south than in the north, there is no doubt that the more able part of the world extends to the south and that greater virtues are in the southerners than among the Scythians. The greater vices likewise are found wherever the former migrate. Hence we shall easily understand a judgment from the history of Livy. After he had commemorated the virtues of Hannibal, he said, "The many great virtues of the man were equalled by monstrous vices: inhuman cruelty, perfidy more than Punic, no truthfulness, no respect for holiness, no fear of the gods, no regard for oaths, no reverence." What Machiavelli wrote is false—that men at the last cannot be extremely wicked, quoting the example of Paul Baglioni, the tyrant of Perugia, who although he could easily have killed Pope Julius along with his escort, preferred to lose control rather than perpetrate such a crime. Hannibal would not have acted in this way. The same Machiavelli

<sup>2</sup> A vague term, not defined by Bodin; it seems to mean northerners in general, especially barbarians.

called the Italians, the Spanish and the French the wickedest of all races. In one passage he extolled the justice and sagacity of the Germans in a most remarkable way. Elsewhere he attacked their perfidy, avarice, and haughtiness. These contradictions have developed from ignorance of the customs and nature of each people. (109-10)

#### *IV The Relation Between Physiology and Astrology*

[The question remains,] what judgment must be formed of the historians who attack the superstition, impiety, magic, infamous lusts, and cruelties of the Greeks, Egyptians, Arabs, and Chaldeans, yet omit the qualities which are praiseworthy? From these people letters, useful arts, virtues, training, philosophy, religion, and lastly *humanitas* itself flowed upon earth as from a fountain. The Scythians, however, do not lack industry, nor do those who hold the middle region, but the southerners attained the most outstanding gifts from God, which cannot be understood better or be judged more certainly for historical purposes than if we use the analogy of the human body, or the well-constituted state, or the world and the celestial constellations.

For the sake of theory let us imagine, therefore, that certain planets preside over these three peoples set up in that order in which we have given them; let us attribute Saturn to the southerners, Jupiter to the next group, and Mars to the northerners. Returning the round again, Venus to the southerners (the sun like a fountain of light will be common to all), Mercury to the next, and the moon to the northerners. From this distribution, as it were, of three peoples, we shall understand more plainly the precise power of all nature. For the Chaldeans say that the power of Saturn controls the understanding, that of Jupiter guides action, that of Mars directs production. [The Hebrews] called Saturn quiet, than which nothing can be of greater importance for contemplation. Jupiter they called just. The Greeks took this idea, as they did all good things, from the Hebrews. They imagined that justice was sitting on the side of Jupiter. But Mars they called strong and brave. On this account the Chaldeans and



the Greeks thought he ruled over war. Saturn, of course, is said to be cold, Mars warm, Jupiter more moderate than either. The first presides over knowledge and those things which find their realization in solitary contemplation of the truth; the second [Jupiter] wisdom, which is embodied in action, embracing all virtues; the third, arts and fabrication, which depend upon skill and strength. The first pertains to the mind, the second to reason, the last to imagination. For the southern people, through continued zeal for contemplation, befitting black bile, have been promoters and leaders of the highest learning. They have revealed the secrets of nature; they have discovered the mathematical disciplines, finally, they first observed the nature and the power of religion and the celestial bodies. Because the Scythians are less suited to contemplation, on account of the supply of blood and humor (by which the mind is so weighed down that it hardly ever emerges), they voluntarily began to take an interest in those things which fall under the senses, that is, in the exercise of the arts and fabrication. Hence from the northerners come those objects called "mechanical" . . . Likewise the same sons of Mars in former times always cultivated military discipline, and still do with incredible enthusiasm . . .

On the other hand, men of the middle region are not designed for the secret sciences as are the southerners or dedicated to manual crafts like the northerners, but are the best fitted for managing affairs. If anyone reads all the writings of the historians he will judge that from men of this type institutions, laws, and customs first came, and the best method of directing the state; then, also, commerce, government, rhetoric, dialectic, and finally the training of a general. Moreover, the masters of these disciplines are said to be Jupiter and Mercury; whoever has Jupiter or Mercury or both in the ascendant at his inception is said to be suited by his very nature to such pursuits. Indeed, it is evident from the reading of histories that great empires have always flourished in Asia, Greece, Assyria, Italy, Gaul, and Upper Germany, which lie between the pole and the equator from the 40th to the 50th degree; and from those regions the greatest rulers, the best

legislators, the most equitable judges, the sagest jurisconsults, the most versatile orators, the cleverest merchants, finally, the most famous players and dramatic actors have had their origin. No jurisconsults come from Africa, much less from Scythia; no orators, few poets, few historians, very few who ply an abundant and profitable commerce, such as Italians, Greeks, Spanish, and Asiatics. Let us then compare these facts with history, that we may judge more correctly concerning the entire matter. (110-13)



It remains, then, to apply to the republic of the world the same analysis that has been made about one state, so that when the functions of the various peoples have been meted out wisdom may in a way belong to the southerners, strength to the Scythians, and prudence to the intervening races. This idea may be seen even in parts of the soul. For the mind itself warns, reason commands, and then the senses, like agents, are employed for carrying out orders, and in the threefold power of the soul—animal, vital, and natural—the first, of course, brings motion and sensation from the brain, the second the vital spirit from the heart, the third quickening power from the liver. I think that there is no better way of understanding the inborn nature of each people or of obtaining a truer and more definite opinion about the history of each than if this microcosm be compared with the great man, that is, with the world.

. . . Let us set up this world like a man, in its proper position . . . The Scythians are reddish in coloring and abound in blood, while the southerners are bloodless and full of black bile. Now on the right side is the liver; on the left, the spleen. The latter is the receptacle of black bile, the former of blood. We have shown also that the Scythians are intemperate and wrathful and that they are driven to vengeance by impulse; but the southerners, only after premeditation. The former trait, is, of course, suited to the right side; the latter, to the left. Then black bile makes men quiet, the gall bladder wrathful, the liver immoderate. The result is, therefore, that in this republic of the world we should place

the Scythians, like soldiers and manual workers, on the right side, the southerners on the left, and men of the middle region in the heart, like officials in the middle of the city. (116-19)

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. . . The race of man in its three varieties, Scythians, I say, southerners, and men of the middle regions, can be related to the triple activities of the soul, wisdom, prudence, and creative ability, which abide in contemplation, action, and production. I believe they can be easily related to the intellectual, the courageous, and the lustful, from the action of brain, heart, and liver and of the celestial stars, and they can be applied to the most certain judgment of all history.

As they say that in 6000 years the period of the elemental world will be complete, from the prophecy of Elia, a certain Rabbi, so for 2000 years men excelled in religion and wisdom and studied zealously the motion of the stars and the universal power of nature. Likewise, in the next 2000 years they were occupied in establishing states, in enacting laws, and in leading forth colonies. In that period dominion was transferred from Saturn to Jove, from the southerners to the men of the middle region. In the following thousand of years, that is, from the death of Christ, various arts and handicrafts, formerly unknown, have come to light. Then came also the great disturbance of wars throughout the world, when of course pagan faith in Jupiter died and empires, so to speak, were overthrown and fell to the Scythians, sons of Mars. Hence suddenly legions of Goths, Burgundians, Herulians, Franks, Lombards, Angles, Britons, Huns, Vandals, Gepidi, Normans, Turks, Tartars, and Muscovites filled Europe and Asia . . .

The Scythians, however, are handicapped by thick humors as though by a weight, so that the force of the intellect does not shine through. The southerners are held fast by black bile in the most serene contemplation of the greatest things. Therefore it happens that the rapid pace of their soul is retarded. We see this not only in the Moors and the Cathaginians but also in the Spanish, when they live in more southerly latitudes. Such is the

slowness in their speech, motion, walk, and all actions, that they seem to languish from inertia. The French, on the other hand, do all things so rapidly that they have finished the matter before the Spanish can begin planning . . . They show rapidity and ease no less in learning than in other actions, and the things which the southerners discover by prolonged investigation they make very quickly or imitate, so that not without justice did Caesar wonder at their aptness. These are marked indications of yellow bile. When Galen applied the forces of the humors from the body to the soul, he attributed prudence to yellow bile, constancy to black bile, gladness to the blood, and mildness to the phlegm. From these blended together there is produced an infinite variety. If these same humors begin to overflow, or burn, or deteriorate, they incline to the opposite vices. (122-24)

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Since these vices are, as it were, innate in each race, history must be judged according to the customs and nature of each people before we can make unfavorable comments. For the moderation of the southerners is not praiseworthy, nor is the drunkenness of the Scythians, which is so much criticized, really to be scorned, because the southerners, through lack of inward heat, are at once satiated with food and drink; the Scythians, on the other hand, could not easily restrain themselves even if they wished, for they are impelled by inward warmth and lack the resources of genius. (128)

## *V The Origins of Society*

Since history for the most part deals with the state and with the changes taking place within it, to achieve an understanding of the subject we must explain briefly the origins, developed form, and ends of principalities, especially since there is nothing more fruitful and beneficial in all history. Other things, indeed, seem very valuable for a knowledge of the nature of the soul and really admirable for shaping the morals of each man, but the things gathered from the reading of historians about the



beginnings of cities, their growth, matured form, decline, and fall are so very necessary, not only to individuals but to everyone, that Aristotle thought nothing was more effective in establishing and maintaining human societies than being informed in the science of governing a state . . . Machiavelli also wrote many things about government—the first, I think, for about 1200 years after barbarism had overwhelmed everything. [His sayings] are on the lips of everyone, and there is no doubt but that he would have written more fully and more effectively and with a greater regard for truth, if he had combined a knowledge of the writings of ancient philosophers and historians with experience. (153)

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. . . The first companionship, that of man and wife, is thought to be the most ancient of all, because there is a certain community of soul, body, and all fortunes. Then the addition of children causes a little difference from the first community. Then comes the relationship of brothers, later of agnates [kinsmen] and members of the same race . . . There follow new relationships and new marriages, from which result more relatives separated from the agnates according to family. When you leave the association based on intermarriage, the next grouping is that of friends, based on excellence; then of neighbors; . . . Later the villages were increased in size, so that they might be safer from strangers, who, wandering around in considerable numbers, as we read in the pages of Thucydides, began to occupy the cultivated fields and buildings when they had driven out the owners . . .

Thus, little by little, friendship, the tie of human association, has been extended from one home into several families, into villages, towns, and cities, and nations, and has spread until, embracing all humankind, it maintains them . . . It is evident that contiguity and common interest is lessened more and more the further one goes from the original relationship of man and woman. Thus, nature has arranged that what each one loves the more this he wishes the more to be his own, and verily all his

own, and he does not wish to share it with others. So not for long does nature permit the common use of things . . .

But that charm of life which men derived from their mutual society soon was spoiled by quarrels when, of course, the weak were oppressed by the strong . . . To escape, some of the weak and feeble flee to the robust and strong, but others flee to the most just to save themselves from the threatened injury. Hence two kinds of state have arisen: the one established by force, the other by equity. From the second group come the kingdom, the aristocracy and the democracy; from the former, tyranny, oligarchy and ochlocracy [mob rule] . . . But since empires won by crime cannot be retained without justice, the tyrants themselves are forced to cultivate this virtue, not for itself, but for themselves. For this reason the reputation of justice was enhanced. Thereupon men fled to each most just and sagacious citizen, guarding him by interposing their own bodies, lest he should be harmed. Then he ruled the citizens equitably. From this it becomes plain, even if we were not guided by history, that the full liberty of everyone, that is, the power of living as you wish, without laws or authority, has been handed over by the separate citizens to one . . .

The earliest organization of public affairs, then, was monarchical. It was either equitable without laws, established on the justice of the king alone, or inequitable when some very powerful man accompanied by a band of robbers reduced the weak to slavery . . . Then in order that they might retain the power which had been obtained through crime, it was necessary to secure it by equity. All writers of history agree on this one point, that in the beginning no attempt was made to establish governments of the optimates, much less of the people. (212-15)

## *VI The Theory of Overturns*

But when dominion started to be measured by greed and personal advantage, not by justice, the change from kingdoms into tyrannies followed. Hence developed the quarrels of the powerful, afterwards even of the weak, since they were

horribly exploited and tormented by those who ought to have protected them. So it has often come about that the more powerful form a conspiracy and overthrow the autocrat, on account of either cruelty, or lust, or both [numerous examples are cited].

This ceaseless change is characteristic of all monarchies that have ever existed. What first Plato, then Polybius and Cicero have written about the necessary change to the democratic form and to that of the optimates is false, since the Scythians are reported never to have had an aristocratic or popular form of government, or the southerners or the Asiatics beyond the Euphrates, or even the Americans. In the middle region only, toward the west, I see democracies and aristocracies. They occur somewhat late, and they have not flourished long. In the end they have developed into legitimate monarchies resembling all nature, except in a very few places . . . And this seems to me to be the one reason: since the men of the middle region are born to the management of affairs, as in a former chapter we have pointed out, all think themselves worthy of rule; yet more especially the westerners, who cannot endure a tyrant easily, because they excel the easterners in independence of spirit. For that reason either they force the kings themselves to obey their laws (nothing more divine can be desired) or they drive tyrants from power and establish governments of the people or of the optimates. This is so plain from the reading of histories that it does not need illustration.

Changes of government are external or internal [examples are cited of external groups taking over a government, by request or by force]. Similarly, an internal change may be one of two sorts: one without any violence at all, the other by force. The former deflects from the right to the wrong without any effort, because the nature of men is such that they are wont to slip downward into vices. For what is more excellent than the first five years of Nero? What more divine than the youth of Solomon? What more famous than the early period of Caligula? But on the other hand, what end baser? When they have reached the extreme limit of vice, they cannot be recalled thence without the greatest effort. Therefore it happens that a kingdom has almost

always been changed without force into a tyranny; aristocracy into oligarchy; democracy into ochlocracy. But the change from a tyranny into a popular form of government always has been violent, that is, the tyrant has been slain. If this man dies without children, which often happens, the optimates usually take over control, fearing lest they should again relapse into tyranny. At first, then, they direct the state with the greatest equity and justice, since the beginnings of their rule are wont to be excellent. But among the optimates, those who have the advantage, in friends, or favor, or riches, or glory for brave deeds try to be superior even to magistrates and commands. From this comes an oligarchy, which Cicero translates as faction, since a few encroach by evil arts upon the wealth and honors of the many. Under these circumstances conspiracies arise among the powerful, and they plot murder until the plebs, sickened by the rule of the wicked, easily attack, despoil, and kill those who are disunited among themselves. Thus, when the government of the factions has at last been overthrown, a popular state follows. For the people, having recovered their liberty, allow themselves to be easily persuaded by the speeches of men of their own class that they should enjoy the liberty which they have won.

It generally happens that the plebs are carried instinctively from the slaughter of tyrants to the other extreme, that is, to popular power . . . Then, when the people, rash and without foresight, are brought to the management of affairs, it is easy for orators to drive the thoughts of the inexperienced plebs whither they wish and to lead them away from objectives not acceptable to the orators. According to the ability and ambition of each man . . . he feeds the plebs with banquets, largess, and the delights of spectacles, so that he attains honors and power through no merit of his own. If anyone attempts to intervene, he is corrupted with gifts or through the accusation of false crimes is forced to abandon his opinion or die . . . It almost always happened in popular governments that the plebs acquired as tyrants the men to whom they had entrusted themselves and the state . . . First [the tyrants] employ satellites and even foreigners and strangers as bodyguards; they throw up defense works; they



seize citadels; they kill the bolder men; they cut down the more powerful like tall poppies; on strangers they bestow honors and rewards; they abolish associations and clubs; they destroy completely friendship among the citizens; they secretly foment discord between nobles and plebs; then they fill the treasury from crimes and assassinations on both sides. Everywhere they place listeners and spies; they declare war on honorable crafts and disciplines; they keep the plebs busy with work and building fortifications, lest they should have leisure for loftier flights of the mind; they undertake wars for the sake of exacting money, and use foreign soldiers; they pretend to have offered an armistice or overtures of peace; they devise new offices and honors and offer them at a price such that they may have more people bound to them. Thieves and wicked men they put in charge of public offices and tax collecting, so that by their activities they suck the wealth and blood of the people. After the thieves have drained them for a long time, orders are issued to drag the thieves to capital punishment. Nothing is more melancholy to observe than the unsuspecting plebs watching the punishment with great delight and applauding the justice of the tyrant . . . All these things are completely included within two secrets of state. The first is that he shall take from the people all power of harming him; the second, that he shall snatch away even the desire to do so. (215-20)

## *VII A Mathematical Theory of History*

Let us see whether changes in empires can be calculated from Pythagorean numbers. The fact that Plato measures the vicissitudes and collapse of states by mathematical sequences alone seems to me clearly absurd. For although immortal God arranged all things in numbers, order and marvelous measure, yet this ought not to be attributed to the influence of numbers, much less to fate, but to the Divine Majesty, which itself, as Augustine wrote, is destiny or such a thing as does not exist at all . . .

The interpreters of Plato record that the fall of the state would

occur at the point where the harmony of numbers falls. In that case, if the state were going to fall by an internal weakness or loss of equilibrium, it would not be that best form of government which Socrates had in mind. That this should have a mathematical origin would seem absurd, for even if numbers which fit together badly do create a disagreeable discord, because the sounds produced from these cannot mingle and, striking each other with some jangling, try to enter the ear, yet when the symphony of sounds is mingled harmoniously, that is, when they are arranged properly in numbers according to proportion, there can be no discord. A state thus tempered and blended in constantly pleasing concord, where there is no disagreement, no clashing of sounds, and from hypothesis cannot be—I do not see in what way it can totter . . .

Since nothing seems more obscure and difficult than the numbers of Plato, I will affirm nothing recklessly; only this, which concerns changes in empires: Plato would have it that states, however well constituted, show signs of weakness in a certain length of time, either from domestic imperfections or by external force. So adamant and gold are constituted of such force and excellence of nature that in themselves apparently they can in no way be damaged, yet by themselves they can be. This is apparent from first principles. Then, also, they may yield to external force, since by the continued application of fire or of chrysulca water little by little they flow away and disintegrate. But it is remarkable that up to now, from all the Academicians, both Greek and Latin, no one has shown by the example of any state, that power and significance of numbers which relates to the type of empires. It is especially remarkable, since this concerns not only the type of government but also the growth, changes, and overthrow of states; it would even force the Epicureans to confess that human things are governed not recklessly and by chance, but by the majesty and Providence of Almighty God.

Let us, then briefly cover what has been omitted by others and perhaps advisedly overlooked. We may be permitted to observe this first: six, the perfect number, affects women; seven, men. Very dangerous for both are those illnesses which occur on the

7th and 9th periods. Throughout all nature such numbers have great power . . . Also I have noted, not without wonder in various cases, that changes happen in states in multiples of either seven or nine, or in the squares of seven or nine multiplied together, or in perfect numbers, or in spherical numbers. (223-25)

\* \* \*

Six, the only perfect digit, with seventy hebdomades, that is, seven times seventy years (for Scriptures take the day for the year) makes another perfect number, 496, which coincides strangely with changes in government . . . Not only from Augustus to Augustulus [the last Roman emperor], but also from the time the kings were driven from the city to the dictatorship of Caesar the same number of years, 496, recurs. Not only this but also from Constantine the Great to Charles the Great, in the year when he first was created emperor at Rome, 496 years were counted . . . Between Arbaces, the first king of the Medes, and Alexander the Great the same period elapsed . . . From the murder of Syagrius, the last of the Romans to rule over Gaul, to Capet, French in race, although the Germans deny it, and Angevin by birth, who took away the dominion from the Franks, the years are that perfect number 496 . . . Again from [Hugh] Capet to the memorable expedition of Charles VIII into Italy that perfect number 496 is completed. (228-32)

\* \* \*

These things show that human affairs do not occur accidentally and haphazard, as the Epicureans boast, or according to an inexorable fate, as the Stoics say, but by divine wisdom. Even if this wisdom arranges all things in an admirable order, motion, number, harmony, and shape, nevertheless it changes these at will, and sometimes arbitrarily . . . God is bound by no number, by no necessity, but is released from the laws of nature, not by the senate or by the people, but by Himself alone. For since He himself ordains the laws of nature and has received dominion from no other than Himself, it is fitting that He should be released

from His laws, and at different times should make decisions about the same things . . .

I discuss these things about the changes of governments briefly from the innermost philosophy, both to stir the learned to contemplation of these most beautiful things, and also that we may not ourselves be downcast by the changes in empires, a fate which often comes to great men. When Pompey escaped from the Pharsalian defeat, bitterly mourning the fall of the Republic, he could be appeased in no other way than by the speech of Secundus the philosopher. This convinced him that the precise duration of empires was determined by immortal God. (235-36)

### *VIII The Best Type of State*

Altogether there are three kinds of government—that is, the rule of one, of several, and of all—and so we must consider not only how to avoid the degraded forms but also how to select the best among the worthy. The tyranny of one man is pernicious; even worse is the tyranny of more than one, which is called oligarchy; worst, finally, is the dominion of the mob, released from all law . . . Then, if we reject these forms, we must choose a popular form, an aristocratic form, or a kingdom. (267)

\* \* \*

If we refer all things to nature, which is chief of all things, it becomes plain that this world, which is superior to anything ever joined together by immortal God, consists of unequal parts and mutually discordant elements and contrary motions of the spheres, so that if the harmony through dissimilarity is taken away, the whole will be ruined. In the same way the best republic, if it imitates nature, which it must do, is held together stable and unshaken by those commanding and obeying, servants and lords, powerful and needy, good and wicked, strong and weak, as if by the mixed association of unlike minds . . . Since Plato, in the *Republic*, forbade equality of possessions (for he enrolled four classes of citizens with different ratings), and those who followed



after, the Academicians, who supported popular states, always forbade equal distribution of goods, lest they overthrow the foundations of states set up chiefly to protect their own possessions—why did they not also eliminate equality of power? The popular form of government is no other than this sharing of sovereignty. It was not so absurd to equate all the resources of everyone as to equate their share of power, because every man can enjoy wealth, but wisdom for ruling is the natural capacity of very few. What stupider than the plebs? What more immoderate? . . . I know not why Machiavelli, a Florentine, praised popular rule so highly, since from his history it is plain that of all states none more unhappy than Florence existed as long as it was democratic . . . If a tyrant should be feared, how much more ought a multitude of tyrants to be feared? Omitting these truisms, however, why in establishing a state, as in all things, do we not imitate nature? (268-71)

\*     \*     \*

Now, since the royal power is natural, that is, instituted by God, chosen in a remarkable decision by the Magi, praised by Homer, Xenophon, Aristotle, Plutarch, Dio, Apollonius, Jerome, and Cyprian, later established by Augustus after serious discussions with Maecenas and Agrippa, and, lastly, approved by the unanimous agreement of all peoples, or of those best known to fame, and by a lasting experience—what more must be said about the best form of state? (282)

## ***IX   Refutation of the Theory of Four Monarchies and the Golden Age***

A long-established, but mistaken, idea about four empires, made famous by the prestige of great men, has sent its roots down so far that it seems difficult to eradicate. It has won over countless interpreters of the Bible; . . . men well read in ancient history and things divine. Sometimes, shaken by their authority, I used to think that it ought not to be doubted. I was

stirred also by the prophecy of Daniel, whose reliability it is a crime to disparage, whose authority it is wicked to question. Yet afterwards I understood that the obscure and ambiguous words of Daniel could be twisted into various meanings; and in interpreting the prophecies I preferred to take that formula of the courts, "it doth not appear" . . . I do not see how we are to relate the wild beasts and the image discussed by Daniel to those empires which flourish everywhere nowadays and have flourished for so many centuries.

At the beginning of the argument we must assume that a monarchy has certain limits of dominion and area or is famous for the origin of its prince or people, so that we may understand what is this thing which they call monarchy. Although it is the main issue of this discussion, the interpreters of the prophecies have not defined it at all clearly. They suppose from this vision of four beasts and an image that an equal number of empires was signified: that is, of Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, and Romans. They augured that there will be no more. Eventually the Germans were to control the Roman empire. Since it was explained in this way by Germans, I judged it was written for the glory of their name and empire, for it is altogether strange to the interpretation of Daniel. I desire, therefore, to refute them with their own arguments. . . . Surely the Germans do not relevantly claim the monarchy of the Romans, since they hold beneath their sway hardly the hundredth part of the world, and the King of Spain has an empire greater than [theirs] . . . The way in which the Germans define a monarchy is absurd, that is, according to Philip Melanchthon, "the most powerful of all states." It is even more absurd that they think they hold the empire of the Romans, which of course would seem laughable to all who have well in mind the map of the world . . . [They] hold no part of the Roman empire except Noricum and Vindelicium . . . If we identify monarchy with force of arms, or with great wealth, or with fertility of areas, or with the number of victories, or with size of population, or with etymology of the name, or with the fatherland of Daniel, or with the seat of the Babylonian empire, or with the amplitude

of sway, it will be more appropriate, certainly, to interpret the prophecy of Daniel as applied to the Sultan of the Turks.

. . . It seems more stupid that Charlemagne (who first seized what they call the monarchy) by race French, born in France, and educated in the language, customs, and institutions of the French, as well as his ancestors, is called German by some, or Alemannic by others . . . More truly, then, and more equitably, the term ("empire") ought to be applied to the French monarchy, which was achieved by the valor of the French before the Germans had heard the word "monarchy." (291-95)

\* \* \*

Once there was a golden age, afterwards, a silver, then a bronze, and then an iron. At length clay followed. But this opinion must be adjusted, for if anyone examines the meaning of historians, not of poets, certainly he will decide that there is a change in human affairs similar to that in the nature of all things; nor is there anything new under the sun, as that sage master of wisdom [Ecclesiastes] says. The age which they call "golden," if it be compared with ours, would seem but iron. [The post-flood "golden" ages are considered, and ridiculed.] But lest these things should seem like fables, let us rather agree with Thucydides, the most truthful father of history. He left witness that a little before his time such was the barbarity and ferocity of man in Greece itself that by land and sea piracy was openly practiced . . . These were the golden and silver ages, in which men were scattered like beasts in the fields and woods and had as much as they could keep by means of force and crime, until gradually they were reclaimed from that ferocity and barbarity to the refinement of customs and the law-abiding society we see about us . . . If human affairs were becoming worse, long ago we should have reached the extreme limit of vices and improbity, where I think in times gone by they had arrived.

Since wicked men cannot progress any further or stand any longer in the same place, it becomes necessary for them to retrace their steps gradually, forced either by shame, which inheres in men naturally, or by necessity, because society can in no way

be developed by such crimes, or else they are forced by the goodness of God, which is the true solution. (296-99)



Was military glory greater in Alexander than in Charlemagne? The former, indeed, was great, but only against the soft Asiatics, as Caesar was wont to say about Pompey after he himself had experienced the strength of our men; the latter, our leader, conquered the most ferocious nations of Europe. Did an equal piety exist in Antoninus and in Louis the Pious? Moreover, what prince of all antiquity can be compared with St. Louis?

. . . Literature suffers changes of fortune. First the arts arise in some places through the practice and the labor of talented men, then they develop, later they flourish for a while at a fixed level, then languish in their old age, and finally begin to die and are buried in a lasting oblivion by the eternal calamity of wars, or because too great abundance (an evil much to be feared in these times, of course) brings satiety to the frivolous, or because God inflicts just punishments upon those who direct useful knowledge to the ruin of men. Although disciplines had gradually developed among the Greeks, so that they believed these arts had reached their peak, such a change came about afterward that Greece herself, to judge from her present predicament, seems never to have existed.

What of the Latins? Among them talented men were so abundant that almost simultaneously they excelled all peoples in warlike glory and in superiority of culture. Yet by a similar fall they also started to lapse into their early barbarity when the forces of the Scythians, pouring into Italy, burned the well-stocked libraries almost everywhere and all the monuments of antiquity . . . I come back to our times in which, after a long eclipse of letters throughout almost the entire world, suddenly such a wealth of knowledge shone forth, such fertility of talents existed, as no age ever excelled . . . This is so definite a change in all respects that no one ought to doubt that the same process occurs in human talents as in the fields, which are wont to repay with greater abundance the privilege of lying fallow.



Some one will say, however, that the ancients were inventors of the arts and to them the glory ought to go. They certainly did discover many things—especially the power of the celestial bodies, the calculated courses of many stars, and of those called “planets.” Then they noted carefully the obscurities of nature and explained many things accurately, and yet they left incomplete many of these things which have been completed and handed down to posterity by men of our own time. No one, looking closely into this matter, can doubt that the discoveries of our men ought to be compared with the discoveries of our elders; many sought to be placed first [the compass; geographical discoveries; medicine; navigation; arts and crafts; printing].

So they who say that all things were understood by the ancients err not less than do those who deny them the early conquest of many arts. Nature has countless treasures of knowledge which cannot be exhausted in any age. Since these things are so and since by some eternal law of nature the path of change seems to go in a circle, so that vices press upon virtues, ignorance upon knowledge, base upon honorable, and darkness upon light, they are mistaken who think that the race of men always deteriorates. (299-302)

## *Giambattista Vico*

(1668-1744)

The difference between Bodin and Vico is the difference between the Renaissance and Baroque worlds. Where Bodin still took all human knowledge for his province, Vico's *New Science* is a recondite treatise on classical philology and law. Both men applied their knowledge to history in the widest sense, but the sort of synthesis Bodin had in mind was no longer possible, partly because two revolutions lay between the two ages, those of Descartes and Newton. While Newtonian thought had no noticeable effect on Vico, Cartesian thought had a great deal.

Descartes' revolution in philosophy consisted of an attempt not to achieve universal knowledge, but to work out a universal method for acquiring it. He did this by reducing the knowable to its bare essentials, the existence of the self and that of God, and then deducing a universe between them. In his system the distinction between the truths of reason (which are clear and distinct, and therefore true) and those of sense-perception (which

depend on sense-evidence and are therefore confused) was vital. Descartes particularly disliked history, partly because its evidence so obviously fell into the second category, and partly because he felt it exalted the past at the expense of the present. As memory was inferior to reason, so was history inferior to philosophy. His disciples spread this teaching far and wide, and just as Platonic philosophy may well have contributed to the decadence of Greek historiography by making it irrelevant to the highest truth, so Cartesianism quite possibly had a similar effect on European thought; the great speculative minds ignored the problems of historical explanation until well into the 18th century.

Vico spent his life in and near Naples, at whose university he became Professor of Rhetoric. Naples at that time was the most heretical intellectual climate in Italy; as a result the church tended to become upset at new ideas and the Inquisition was on the *qui vive*, and indeed had interested itself in several of his friends. New philosophical systems were not enthusiastically encouraged: although Vico's age is one of the greatest in all philosophy, he was the only significant Italian philosopher of his century.

Vico's reading, which was very wide, included all the classical writers available, as well as the Bible, St. Augustine and Bodin. Like Augustine and Bodin, he revered Plato as the greatest of all secular thinkers. With Augustine he used Plato's doctrine of the reality of ideal forms, and also the Augustinian idea of the separate development of the different parts of mankind under God. Although critical of Bodin, it may have been from him that Vico drew the connection between history and law, and language-origins as a tool for investigating national origins. His thinking was deeply influenced by the great 17th-century legists, particularly Grotius, Selden and Pufendorf. On the other hand he attacked the neo-Epicureans and Stoics for their doctrines of chance and fate as the controlling force in the universe. But above all he had to answer the detractors, not of Providence but of history, and particularly Descartes.

This could no longer be done in the Renaissance manner, by

lining up classical citations to demonstrate the special dignity of history, which Vico was not interested in doing in any case. In a Cartesian society a historical thinker would do well to take geometrical thought seriously. Vico took his title from Bacon or Galileo, and set up the *New Science* as a series of axioms, postulates and corollaries, not so much with the Bodinian idea of explaining history as with the Augustinian one of demonstrating divine purpose working through humanity, particularly in relation to Roman society.

Three of his ideas stand out; the reason for studying history (theodicy), the tools that needed to be used (law, philology and the study of the mind), and the pattern of the past that emerges from it (*corso* and *ricorso*). The first is not at all unusual, but has some innovations; the third is a new adaptation of an old theory; the second is revolutionary. The reasons for *not* studying the past had grown and flourished since Bodin's time; a great deal more was known both about blind alleys and about rigorous research. Where to Bodin history still had a fine moral flavor, preserving good or bad examples like beetles in amber, for Vico it is a science in itself, with its own methods of study and its own intrinsic meaning. This means that the Cartesians, Epicureans and Stoics are all wrong. Vichian history is a "rational civil theology of divine providence," a methodical way of proving God's goodness by demonstrating that all through the human past He consistently has brought good out of evil, not so much by direct intervention as by using the random chaos of conflicting wills to build ordered societies. The wild, apparently disordered scramble of history proves an acting God not just as well as, but better than, the majestic and unvarying universe of physics.

The tools to be used in uncovering civil providence are not those of Vico's historical predecessors, for most of whom, since Tacitus, he has little use. Heroes, villains, wars, treaties and sovereigns are not the main point in illustrating Divine Power working through humanity. What Vico is looking for is the matrix from which the individuals come, the development of a way of looking at life characteristic of a culture: a common mind, which he calls the "common sense of mankind." He begins, not



with a theory of how man in a state of nature should have behaved, but with a thorough analysis of how he has in fact behaved. His search for material means a radical departure, for it involves the use not merely of ordinary historical records but of two kinds of much earlier evidence: myths, which invariably embody truth in a "vulgar" or popular form, and laws, which show a collective conscience awakening. A combination of these shows how this common mind works in very ancient societies, a problem almost all his predecessors had ignored.

In the course of his studies in philology and law Vico noted that certain customs were present even in really primitive times and could be traced forward as they developed into social and legal institutions. At every stage they revealed a culture with a characteristic outlook, growing slowly and painfully toward consciousness of independent thought. The standard he used was Greek and, particularly, Roman society. As his work continued over the years he discovered that Rome had not inherited its laws from the Greeks as scholars had thought, but developed its own. This proved that Providence had not favored one gentile people, but was working through them all. What applied to Rome applied elsewhere and became a key principle. History was no longer to be studied in order to find universal or even natural law; law was to be used to reveal God in history.

But this development of a common mind as the basic line of civilization carried Vico's radicalism much further, separating him not just from historians but from contemporary philosophy: it provided him with the answer to Descartes. If the knowledge of clear and distinct ideas is the only true knowledge, then history is not worth studying. But Vico found that what was true to the Romans was what had been *done*: a thing could be known properly only by its maker. To Descartes, man could know geometrical symbols because they stood for a clear and distinct truth. To Vico an even better truth stood out: since men had made society, it could be re-created in the minds of their successors, through an act of historical imagination. Thus the development of humanity, which man had made, was not only as discoverable

as the truths of geometry, which God had made: it was at least as much worth studying. History became no longer an improving spectacle but an act of sympathetic participation in reality: it had an element of Greek "participation in reason," although it was stated in terms of Hebrew-Christian faith. Historical investigation once again, as in Augustine, proved an acting God. The historian no longer acted as judge of the area of mingled human and divine action called "the past"; he became part of it.

The system, then, is based on mind: the developing human mind, which can understand what it makes, but imperfectly; and unchanging divine mind, which understands absolutely and directs the universe it has made, but ordinarily not by particular interventions. History is really psychology, and the standard to which its investigation must conform is not 18th-century reason, and much less Cartesian mathematical certainty, but informed and imaginative insight into situations paralleling our own. Since human nature is basically the same among all men, all nations basically must have similar histories, and rules that apply to one must apply to all the rest.

As the basis of his new science, Vico used philosophy and philology. Philosophy seems to mean (although the definitions are not clear) reasoning, or the general ideas underlying the study of history or anything else. The one thing philosophy does *not* mean is rigid Cartesian analysis, even though Vico at one point calls his method "geometrical." Philology means not only comparative word-study, but all the techniques used by historians and others to uncover human languages and deeds. The two are intrinsic parts of each other; jurisprudence, the analysis of legal systems, uses both to the fullest extent. The combination of all three gives a sound view of the origins of political and intellectual history. Vico is only interested in the post-Roman past, the present or the future to the extent that they bear out his theory, most of which applies directly only to the period before the Punic wars. His principle of the independent discovery of law by each people necessitated a new method of proof: supposed facts are to be checked by their compatibility with a people's laws, which must

be compared with mental habits as shown in other records, for example literature and philosophy. The study of any nation's laws invariably gives the key to what it has done in other fields.

Some of Vico's more original discoveries occurred through philosophical analysis of myths. These gave a vital clue to the real state of mind of primitive men, also ignored by most of his more recent predecessors, who had been concerned with a theoretical State of Nature to improve upon by a later Social Contract. Vico, who did not believe in a Social Contract, began not with the Garden of Eden but with Noah's *gentile* descendants after the flood, who could be presented as illiterate, repulsive barbarians without serious ecclesiastical consequences. Society began with religion: these earliest men, terrified of divine wrath in thunderstorms, began living in caves. Their proximity there founded families, and eventually, as the concept of common welfare widened, societies and laws. Since their reason was infantile—Vico has no use, unlike some of his contemporaries, for the myth of the Noble Savage—their imagination had full play. Primitive men thought invariably and in every field in terms of poetry: early Roman law, for example is a "serious poem."

In this development Vico discerned a Law of Three Stages, which later became a cliché in philosophy of history. There is a rhythm in every aspect of the early history and thought of peoples: an age of gods, of heroes and of men. The three stages can be called obscure, fabulous and historical. In each, one characteristic of mind is prevalent: sensation, imagination, reason. He took the original idea from Herodotus, but Vico's new twist to the theory is his division of the stages not by geography or changes of government or faith, but by clearly delimited mental and cultural growth. If this is a law, it is not a universal one: Vico himself notes several exceptions. But it is the type and is the best way of studying society. In the age of gods, men are barbarous and emotional: natural forces are Beings to be propitiated. Gradually "numina" become "nomina"; i.e., divinities become names for things, and the age of heroes appears.

The heroic age still attributes deeds done by many men to one, who sums up a whole epoch (examples are Minos, Lycur-

gus, Romulus), but the hero is now something like a human being. "Heroic" men are rough, brutal and full of fears, but they are at least slightly civilized. Gradually they conquer the members of other tribes or are conquered by them. The losers are treated as slaves, a great advantage over the earlier practice of sacrificing them to the divinities, and a more complex community life begins. Aristocratic government under tribal leaders is menaced, as in Bodin, by increasing struggles over property and by plebeian revolts. As the heroes are cut down to size, the plebs attempt the experiment of popular governments, whose coming coincides with the third or human age. Eventually monarchies supersede the democracies, and myths fade as reason develops into skepticism; civilization turns into refinement, then luxury and finally corruption. At this point there is an alternative: either a local Caesar founds a strong government, or a foreign people subdues the corrupt nation, or it sinks into a refined barbarism that Vico finds particularly repulsive. Finally the neo-barbarians revert to pure barbarism, and the cycle begins again.

This is the Vichian scheme of history. The same course of development, or *corso*, occurs in all civilizations, "an ideal, eternal history traversed in time by every nation." It is like the life of the individual human from childhood to old age, and something like Polybius' cycles, applied on a cultural more than a political plane. As each stage, when its tendencies are carried to the fullest, changes into something else, so each age would appear to contain the seeds of its own decay. As Polybius' cycles can return and continue, so can Vico's *corso* become a *ricorso*, a repetition of the same three ages, not in their specific events (this would have been a denial of the once-for-all nature of Christianity) but in the general legal and therefore cultural framework. The *ricorsi* are often cited as Vico's special contribution to historical theory: not a cycle, but a spiral. But Vico nowhere says a *ricorso* reaches a higher level than a *corso*. He discusses *ricorsi* only at the end of the book, and does not use them so much to interpret later history, which he is not interested in, as to show that the three-stage law applies universally. He certainly believes in a theory of collapse and revival, both after the flood and after the Dark



Ages; but half of this example does not work, because to Vico Biblical history does not follow ordinary historical laws. At no point does he compare the relative heights of *corsi* and *ricorsi*: Dante is a "Tuscan Homer," but we are not told whether the Homeric or Tuscan society was able to produce better poets—or why.

Thus it is as difficult to work a law of progress into Vico as it is with Bodin. The spread of the rule of law would seem to indicate at least temporary advance, but nothing is said about how much from an old civilization is carried into a new one. Nor is rational man necessarily an improvement over poetic man: Vico is usually as cautious in his esthetic as in his ethical judgments about the relatively early stages of society with which he is mainly concerned. Conflict between individuals and groups appears often, and as in Bodin is both inevitable and a good thing. But nothing is said about the goal of civilization; it is assumed to reside in Providence, the aspect of Grace that works through human "common sense." Both as a cyclicist and a believer in Providence, Vico would have had none of the Idea of Progress as it was being developed by his French contemporaries. Where progressive man would steadily approach closer to God, Vico's cyclical man, a citizen of an earthly city, keeps his distance.

The *New Science* has glaring faults. While its main outlines stand out reasonably well, the details are often confused, as is the terminology. Vico is passionate, pugnacious and incredibly repetitive. He completely lacks classical restraint, which is understandable, considering that he feels himself surrounded by people of incredible stupidity. His exuberant imagination vaults and soars into the empyrean, but the axioms in the book are neither axiomatic nor are its proofs conclusive. While Vico's scope of knowledge was extraordinary, his argument is far from neat. Sometimes it seems as though he is trying to find a way to state the problems he is working on at the same time he is trying to solve the problem itself. It is curious that a scientific proof of Providence should have been attempted by a man whose knowledge of both science and theology was anything but strong. The book is mistitled: whatever the theory is, it is not a new science.

On the other hand, it is a major breakthrough in historical thinking. Where Bodin had used new material in an old way, Vico used old material in a new way. He developed the concept of a *zeitgeist*: his history is really the collective biography, not of heroes and villains but of a whole culture. It is to be investigated not so much by reading historians as by reading between the lines, and even more by minute research, not into heat-zones or planetary positions, but into customs, laws and language. This pointed the way to a more useful kind of thinking than any philosopher of history had developed since the Greeks. His insistence that the study of human society can be as much a science as physics, even though it is a science of a quite different kind, opened a whole new field of investigation. He anticipated the positivist law of three stages, but in an unusual way: as men, who have created gods in their minds, become less conscious of these divinities, a historian can see Divinity working through them more fully.

But Vico never founded a school: he was too different from his age to be liked by contemporary scholars, most of whom either attacked the *New Science* or ignored it. Montesquieu and Voltaire apparently left it alone, but it is possible that Herder read it, and certain in the case of Goethe. By the end of the 19th century a great many more of Vico's ideas had been absorbed than were acknowledged. He has been cited as the master of Comte, Buckle, Lecky and Marx. In the 20th century two especially avid disciples have been Croce and Collingwood, who saw in him a progenitor of their own idealistic theory of history. He is being increasingly studied, and the study is worthwhile: Vico, for all his faults, is the greatest single ancestor of modern philosophy of history.

READINGS<sup>1</sup>*I Idea of the Work*

2. . . . Until now, the philosophers, contemplating Divine Providence only through the natural order, have shown only a part of it. Accordingly men offer worship, sacrifices and other divine honors to God as to the Mind which is the free and absolute sovereign of nature, because by His eternal counsel He has given us existence through nature, and through nature preserves it to us. But the philosophers have not yet contemplated His Providence in respect of that part of it which is most proper to men, whose nature has this principal property: that of being social. In providing for this property God has so ordained and disposed human affairs that men, having fallen from complete justice by original sin, and while intending almost always to do something quite different and often quite the contrary—so that for private utility they would live alone like wild beasts—have been led by this same utility and along the aforesaid different and contrary paths to live like men in justice and to keep themselves in society and thus to observe their social nature. It will be shown in the present work that this is the true nature of man, and thus that law exists in nature. The conduct of divine providence in this matter is one of the things whose rationale is a chief business of our Science, which becomes in this respect a rational civil theology of divine providence.

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<sup>1</sup> The *Scienza Nuova*, in which all Vico's major ideas occur, was first issued in 1725. The second edition re-worked the material from a less critical point of view, and was dedicated to his patron, who had just become Pope. The following selections are from the third edition, of 1744, translated by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch as *The New Science of Giambattista Vico* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1948). Reprinted by permission of the Cornell University Press. The paragraph-numbering is that of Bergin and Fisch. Book I consists of paragraphs 1-360; II, 361-779; III, 780-914; IV, 915-1045. Book V, 1046-1112, deals with the *ricorsi*, and is the briefest part of the work.

## II *Establishment of Principles*

119. . . . We now propose the following axioms, both philosophical and philological, including a few reasonable and proper postulates and clarified definitions. And just as the blood does in animate bodies, so will these elements course through our Science and animate it in all its reasonings about the common nature of nations.

120. Because of the indefinite nature of the human mind, wherever it is lost in ignorance, man makes himself the measure of all things.

121. This axiom explains those two common human traits, on the one hand that rumor grows in its course, on the other that rumor is deflated by the presence [of the thing itself]. In the long course that rumor has run from the beginning of the world it has been the perennial source of all the exaggerated opinions which have hitherto been held concerning remote antiquities unknown to us, by virtue of that property of the human mind noted by Tacitus in his *Life of Agricola*, where he says that everything unknown is taken for something great.

122. It is another property of the human mind that whenever man can form no idea of distant and unknown things, they judge them by what is familiar and at hand.

123. This axiom points to the inexhaustible source of all the errors about the beginnings of humanity that have been adopted by entire nations and by all the scholars. For when the former began to take notice of them and the latter to investigate them, it was on the basis of their own enlightened, cultivated and magnificent times that they judged the origins of humanity, which must nevertheless by the nature of things have been small, crude and quite obscure.

124. Under this head are to be recalled two types of conceit we have mentioned above, one of the nations and the other of the scholars.

125. As for the conceit of the nations, we have heard that golden saying of Diodorus Siculus. Every nation, according to



him, whether Greek or barbarian, has had the same conceit that it before all other nations invented the comforts of human life and that its remembered history goes back to the very beginning of the world.

127. To this conceit of the nations there may be added that of the scholars, who will have it that whatever they know is as old as the world.

128. This axiom disposes of all the opinions of the scholars concerning the matchless wisdom of the ancients. It convicts of fraud the oracles of Zoroaster, the verses of Orpheus, and the Golden Verses of Pythagoras . . .

129. To be useful to the human race, philosophy must raise and direct weak and fallen man, not rend his nature or abandon him in his corruption.

130. This axiom dismisses from the school of our Science the Stoics who seek to mortify the senses and the Epicureans who make them the criterion. For both deny Providence, the former chaining themselves to fate, the latter abanding themselves to chance. The latter moreover affirm that the human soul dies with the body. Both should be called monastic or solitary philosophers. On the other hand [this axiom] admits to our school the political philosophers, and first of all the Platonists, who agree with all the lawgivers on these three main points: that there is Divine Providence, that human passions should be moderated and made into human virtues, and that the human soul is immortal. Thus from this axiom are derived the three principles of this Science.

131. Philosophy considers man as he should be and so can be of service to but very few, who wish to live in the Republic of Plato, not to fall back into the dregs of Romulus.

132. Legislation considers man as he is in order to turn him to good uses in human society. Out of ferocity, avarice and ambition, the three vices which run throughout the human race, it creates the military, merchant and governing classes and thus the strength, riches and wisdom of commonwealths. Out of these three great vices, which could certainly destroy all mankind on the face of the earth, it makes civil happiness.

133. This axiom proves that there is Divine Providence and further that it is divine legislative mind. For out of the passions of men, each bent on his private advantage, for the sake of which they would live like wild beasts in the wilderness, it has made the civil orders by which they may live in human society.

141. Human choice, by its nature most uncertain, is made certain and determined by the common sense of men with respect to human needs or utilities, which are the two origins of the natural law of nations.

142. Common sense is judgment without reflection, shared by an entire class, an entire people, an entire nation, or the whole human race.

144. Uniform ideas originating among entire peoples unknown to each other must have a common ground of truth.

145. This axiom is a great principle which establishes the common sense of the human race as the criterion taught to the nations by Divine Providence to define what is certain in the natural law of nations. And the nations reach this certainty by recognizing the underlying agreements which, despite variations of detail, obtain among them all in respect of this law. Thence issues the mental dictionary for assigning origins to all the divers articulated languages. By means of this dictionary is conceived the ideal eternal history which determines the histories in time of all the nations . . .

146. This same axiom does away with all the ideas hitherto held concerning the natural law of nations, which has been thought to have originated in one nation and been passed on to others. This error was encouraged by the bad example of the Egyptians and Greeks in vainly boasting that they had spread civilization throughout the world. It was this error that gave rise to the fiction that the Law of the Twelve Tables came to Rome from Greece. If that had been the case, it would have been a civil law communicated to other peoples by human provision and not a law which Divine Providence ordained naturally in all nations along with human customs themselves. Indeed it will be one of our constant labors throughout this book to demonstrate that the natural law of nations originated separately among the

various peoples, each in ignorance of the others, and that subsequently, as a result of wars, embassies, alliances and commerce, it came to be recognized as common to the entire human race.

### *III The Three Ages*

173. Two great remnants of Egyptian antiquity have come down to us . . . One of them is the fact that the Egyptians reduced all preceding world-time to three ages, namely, the age of the gods, the age of the heroes, and the age of men. The other is that during these three ages three languages had been spoken, corresponding in order to the three ages: namely, the hieroglyphic or sacred language, the symbolic or figurative (heroic) language, and the epistolary or vulgar language of men employing conventional signs for communicating the common needs of their life.

174. Homer . . . mentions a language more ancient than his own (the heroic language) and calls it "the language of the gods."

175. Varro had the diligence to assemble thirty thousand names of gods—for the Greeks counted that many. These were related to as many needs of physical, moral, economic or civil life of the earliest times.

176. These three axioms established the fact that the world of peoples began everywhere with religion. This will be the first of the three principles of this Science.

177. Wherever a people has grown savage in arms so that human laws have no longer any place among it, the only powerful means of reducing it is religion.

178. This axiom establishes the fact that divine providence initiated the process by which the fierce and violent were brought from their outlaw state to humanity and entered upon national life. It did so by awakening in them a confused idea of divinity, which they in their ignorance attributed to that to which it did not belong. Thus through the terror of this imagined divinity, they began to put themselves in some order.

196. Every gentile nation had its Hercules, who was the son

of Jove; and Varro, the most learned of antiquarians, numbered as many as forty of them.

197. This axiom marks the beginning of heroism among the first peoples, which was born of the false opinion that the heroes were of divine origin.

198. This same axiom and the preceding one, giving us so many Joves and then so many Herculesees among the gentile nations, together show us that these nations could not have been founded without religion and could not grow without courage. Moreover, since in their beginnings these nations were forest-bred and shut off from any knowledge of each other, and since by axiom [144] "uniform ideas, born among peoples unknown to each other, must have a common ground of truth," these axioms give us this great principle as well: that the first fables must have contained civil truths, and must therefore have been the histories of the first peoples.

215: Children excel in imitations; we observe them generally amuse themselves by imitating what they are able to understand.

216. This axiom shows that the world in its infancy was composed of poetic nations, for poetry is nothing but imitation.

217. This axiom will explain the fact that all the arts of things necessary, useful, convenient, and even in large part those of human pleasure, were invented in the poetic centuries before the philosophers came; for the arts are nothing but imitations of nature, poems in a certain way made of things.

241. Men first feel necessity, then look for utility, next attend to comfort, still later amuse themselves with pleasure, thence grow dissolute in luxury, and finally go mad and waste their substance.

242. The nature of peoples is first crude, then severe, then benign, then delicate, finally dissolute.

243. In the human race first appear the huge and grotesque, like the Cyclopes; then to the proud and magnanimous, like Achilles; then the valorous and just, like Aristides and Scipio Africanus; nearer to us, imposing figures with great semblances of virtue accompanied by great vices, who among the vulgar win the name for true glory, like Alexander and Caesar; still later,



the melancholy and reflective, like Tiberius; finally the dissolute and shameless madmen, like Caligula, Nero, and Domitian.

244. This axiom shows that the first sort were necessary in order to make one man obey another in the family-state and prepare him to be law-abiding in the city-state that was to come; the second sort, who naturally did not yield to their peers, were necessary to establish the aristocratic commonwealth on the basis of the families; the third sort to open the way for popular liberty; the fourth to bring in the monarchies; the fifth to establish them; the sixth to overthrow them.

245. This with the preceding axioms [241-42] gives a part of the principles of the ideal eternal history traversed in time by every nation in its rise, development, maturity, decline and fall.

290. Natural liberty is fiercer in proportion as property attaches more closely to the persons of its owners; and civil servitude is clapped on with goods of fortune not essential to life.

291. The first part of this axiom is another principle of the natural heroism of the first peoples; the second part is the natural principle of monarchies.

292. At first men desire to be free of subjection and attain equality; witness the plebs in the aristocratic commonwealths, which finally turn popular. Then they attempt to surpass their equals; witness the plebs in the popular commonwealths, later corrupted into commonwealths of the powerful. Finally they wish to put themselves above the laws; witness the anarchies or unlimited popular commonwealths, than which there is no greater tyranny, for in them there are as many tyrants as there are bold and dissolute men in the cities. At this juncture the plebs, warned by the ills they suffer, and casting about for a remedy, seek shelter under monarchies. This is a natural royal law by which Tacitus legitimizes the Roman monarchy under Augustus, who, "when the world was wearied by civil strife, subjected it to empire under the title of Prince."

293. When the first cities were established on the basis of the families, the nobles, by reason of their native lawless liberty, were opposed to checks and burdens; witness the aristocratic commonwealths in which the nobles are lords. Later they are

forced by the plebs, greatly increased in numbers and trained in war, to submit to laws and burdens equally with their plebeians; witness the nobles in the popular commonwealths. Finally, in order to preserve their comfortable existence, they are naturally inclined to accept the supremacy of one ruler; witness the nobles under the monarchies.

294. These two axioms with the others preceding, from the 65th on, are the principles of the ideal eternal history above referred to.

#### *IV The Relation Between History and Mind*

331. . . . In the night of thick darkness enveloping the earliest antiquity, so remote from ourselves, there shines the eternal and never-failing light of a truth beyond all question: that the world of civil society has certainly been made by men, and that its principles are therefore to be found within the modifications of our own human mind. Whoever reflects on this cannot but marvel that the philosophers should have bent all their energies to the study of the world of nature, which, since God made it, He alone knows; and that they should have neglected the study of the world of nations or civil world, which since men had made it, men could hope to know . . .

332. Now since this world of nations has been made by men, let us see in what things all men agree and always have agreed. For these things will be able to give us the universal and eternal principles (such as every science must have) on which all nations were founded and still preserve themselves.

333. We observe that all nations, barbarous as well as civilized, though separately founded because remote from each other in time and space, keep these three human customs: all have some religion, all contract solemn marriages, all bury their dead. And in no nation, however savage and crude, are any human activities celebrated with more elaborate ceremonies and more sacred solemnity than religion, marriage and burial. For by the axiom [144] that "uniform ideas, born among peoples unknown to each other, must have a common ground of truth," it must have been

dictated to all nations that from these three institutions humanity began among them all, and therefore they must be most devoutly observed by them all, so that the world should not again become a bestial wilderness. For this reason we have taken these three eternal and universal customs as three first principles of this Science.

341. But men because of their corrupted nature are under the tyranny of self-love, which compels them to make private utility their chief guide. Seeking everything useful for themselves and nothing for their companions, they cannot bring their passions under control to direct them toward justice. We thereby establish the fact that man in the bestial state desires only his own welfare; having taken wife and begotten children, he desires his own welfare along with that of his family; having entered upon civil life, he desires his own welfare along with that of his city; when its rule is extended over several peoples, he desires his own welfare along with that of the nation; when the nations are united by wars, treaties of peace, alliances and commerce, he desires his own welfare along with that of the entire human race. In all these conditions man desires principally his own utility. Therefore it is only by Divine Providence that he can be held within these orders to practice justice as a member of the society of the family, the state, and finally of mankind. Unable to attain all the utilities he wishes, he is constrained by these orders to seek those which are his due; and this is called just. That which regulates all human justice is therefore divine justice, which is administered by Divine Providence to preserve human society.

342. . . . It is this that makes up the first and principal part of the subject matter of jurisprudence, namely the divine things which make up its other and complementary part. Our new Science must therefore be a demonstration, so to speak, of the historical fact of Providence, for it must be a history of the forms of order which, without human discernment or intent, and often against the designs of men, Providence has given to this great city of the human race. For although this world has been created in time and particular, orders established therein by Providence are universal and eternal.

347. In search of these natures of human things our Science proceeds by a severe analysis of human thoughts about the human necessities or utilities of social life, which are the two perennial springs of the natural law of nations . . . In its second principal aspect, our Science is therefore a history of human ideas, on which it seems the metaphysics of the human mind must proceed. This queen of sciences, by the axiom that "the sciences must begin where their subject matters began," took its start when the first men began to think humanly, and not when the philosophers began to reflect on human ideas . . .

348. To determine the times and places for such a history, that is, when and where these human thoughts were born, and thus to give it certainty by means of its own (so to speak) metaphysical chronology and geography, our Science applies a likewise metaphysical art of criticism with regard to the founders of these same nations, in which it took more than a thousand years for these writers to come forward with whom philological criticism has hitherto been occupied. And the criterion our criticism employs, in accordance with an axiom above stated [142] is that taught by Divine Providence, and common to all nations, namely the common sense of the human race, determined by the necessary harmony of human things, in which all the beauty of the civil world consists. The decisive sort of proof in our Science is therefore this: that, once these orders were established by Divine Providence, the course of the affairs of the nations had to be, must now be and will have to be such as our Science demonstrates, even if infinite worlds were produced from time to time through eternity, which is certainly not the case.

349. Our Science therefore comes to describe at the same time an ideal eternal history traversed in time by the history of every human nation in its rise, progress, maturity, decline and fall. Indeed we go so far as to assert that whoever meditates this Science tells himself this ideal eternal history only so far as he makes it by proof "it had, has, and will have to be." For the first indubitable principle above posited [331] is that this world of nations has certainly been made by men, and its guise must therefore be found within the modifications of our own human



mind. And history cannot be more certain than when he who creates the things also describes them. Thus our Science proceeds exactly as does geometry, which, while it constructs out of its elements or contemplates the world of quantity, itself creates it; but with a reality greater in proportion to that of the orders having to do with human affairs, in which there are neither points, lines, surfaces, nor figures. And this very fact is an argument, O reader, that these proofs are of a kind divine, and should give thee a divine pleasure; since in God knowledge and creation are one and the same thing.

360. From all that has been set forth in general concerning the establishment of the principles of this science, we conclude that since its principles are Divine Providence, moderation of the passions by marriage, and immortality of human souls [witnessed] by burial, and since the criterion it uses is that what is felt to be just by all men or by the majority must be the rule of social life (and on these principles and this criterion there is agreement between the vulgar wisdom of all lawgivers and the esoteric wisdom of the philosophers of greatest repute), these must be the bounds of human reason. And let him who would transgress them beware lest he transgress all humanity.

## *V The Golden Age*

544. . . . When [the early Greeks] called the ears of grain golden apples, these must have been the only gold in the world. For at that time metallic gold was still unmined, and they did not know how to extract it in crude masses, to say nothing of shining and burnishing it; nor indeed, when men still drank the water of springs, could the use of gold have been at all prized. It was only later, from the metal's resemblance in color to the most highly prized food of those times, that it was metaphorically called gold . . .

546. These ears of grain must then have been the golden apples which Hercules was the first to bring (or harvest) from Hesperia . . .

547. From all of which we derive this great corollary: that the

division of the four ages of the world—that is, the ages of gold, silver, copper and iron—was invented by the poets of degenerate times. For it was this poetic gold, namely, grain, that among the Greeks lent its name to the golden age, whose innocence was but the extreme savagery of the Cyclopes . . . who lived separately and alone in their caves with their wives and children . . .

## *VI Providence and the Course of History*

629. We have seen that the generation of commonwealths began in the age of the gods, in which governments were theocratic, that is, divine. Later they developed into the first human, that is the heroic, governments, here called human to distinguish them from the divine. Within these human governments . . . the age of gods continued to run its course, for that religious way of thinking must still have persisted by which whatever men themselves did was attributed to the agency of the gods . . . Herein is Divine Providence to be supremely admired, for, when men's intentions were quite otherwise, it brought them in the first place to the fear of divinity (the cult of which is the first fundamental basis of commonwealths). Their religion in turn led them to remain fixed on the first vacant lands which they occupied before all others . . . Further, again by means of religion, Providence led them to unite with chosen women for constant and life-long companionship; hence the institution of matrimony, the recognized source of all authority. Later, with these women, they were found to have established the families, which are the seed-plot of the commonwealths. And finally, with the opening of the asylums, they discovered that they had founded the clienteles. Thus the elements were prepared from which, with the first agrarian law, the cities were to be born, based upon the two communities of men that composed them, one of nobles to command, the other of plebeians to obey . . .

630. . . . Let us consider and meditate on the simplicity and naturalness with which Providence ordered these affairs of men, of which they said truly though in a false sense that they were all the work of the gods . . . Then let us ask ourselves if, among all

human possibilities, so many and such various and diverse effects could in any other way have had simpler or more natural beginnings among those very men who were said by Epicurus to have been born of chance and by Zeno to have been creatures of necessity . . .

## *VII The "Corso" or Course of Nations*

915. In virtue of the principles of this Science established in the first book, and of the origins of all the divine and human things of the gentile world which we investigated and discovered in the second book, and the discovery in the third book that the poems of Homer are two great treasure stores of the natural law of the nations of Greece (just as we had already found the Law of the Twelve Tables to be a great monument of the natural law of the nations of Latium) we shall now, by the aid of philosophical and philological illumination, and relying on the axioms above stated concerning the ideal eternal history [241-45] in this fourth book, discuss the course the nations take, proceeding in all their various and diverse customs with constant uniformity upon the division of the three ages which the Egyptians said had elapsed before them in their world, namely, the successive ages of gods, heroes and men. For the nations will be seen to develop in conformity with this division by a constant and uninterrupted order of causes and effects present in every nation, through three kinds of natures. From these natures arise three kinds of customs; and in virtue of these customs three kinds of natural laws of nations are observed; and in consequence of these laws three kinds of civil states or commonwealths are established. And in order that men, having reached the stage of human society, may on the one hand communicate to each other the aforesaid three most important matters [customs, laws, commonwealths], three kinds of languages and as many of characters are formed; and in order that they may on the other hand justify them, three kinds of jurisprudence assisted by three kinds of authority and three kinds of reason in as many of judgments. The three kinds of jurisprudence prevail in three sects of times, which

the nations profess in the course of their history. These groups of three special unities, with many others that derive from them and will also be enumerated in this book, all lead to one general unity. This is the unity of the religion of a provident divinity, which is the unity of the spirit informing and giving life to this world of nations . . . [sections 916-27 explain that the three kinds of natures, natural law, governments, languages and jurisprudence correspond to the three stages of divine, heroic and human].

1004. All that we have had to say in this book [Book IV] is so much evidence to prove that in the course of the entire lifetime of nations they follow this order through these three kinds of commonwealths or civil states, and no more. They all have their roots in their first, which were the divine governments, and from this beginning all nations (by the axioms above posited [241-45] as principles of the ideal eternal history) must proceed through this sequence of human things: first becoming commonwealths of optimates, later free popular commonwealths, and finally monarchies . . .

1005. Hence we say that the first gentile fathers, passing from the bestial life to the human, retained, in the religious times in the state of nature under the divine governments, much of the savagery and cruelty of their recent origins . . . and that likewise in the formation of the first aristocratic commonwealths the private sovereign powers remained intact in the hands of the family fathers, just as they had held them in the previous state of nature . . .

1006. The commonwealths remained aristocratic as long as the fathers preserved this authority of ownership within their reigning orders, and until the plebs of the heroic peoples had obtained from the fathers themselves laws extending to them the certain ownership of the fields, the right to solemn nuptials, the sovereign powers, the priesthoods and thereby the science of the laws. But as soon as the plebs of the heroic cities became numerous and inured to war . . . and with force on their side (the force of their numbers) began to enact laws without the authority of the senates, then the commonwealths changed from aristo-



cratic to popular . . . But when the powerful in the popular commonwealths directed this public counsel to the private interests of their own power, and the free peoples, for the sake of private utilities, let themselves be seduced by the powerful to subject their public liberty to the ambition of the latter, then factions, seditions and civil wars, ruinous to their very nations, brought on the monarchical form.

### VIII *Primitive or "Poetic" Law as the Foundation of Abstract Thought*

1035. . . . Because [ancient peoples] did not understand abstract forms, they imagined corporeal forms, and they imagined them, after their own nature, animate. *Hereditas* or "inheritance" they imagined as mistress of hereditary property, and they recognized her as entire in every particular item of inherited goods . . .

1036. In conformity with such natures, ancient jurisprudence was throughout poetic. By its fictions what had happened was taken as not having happened, and what had not happened as having happened; those not yet born as already born; the living as dead; and the dead as still living in their estates pending acceptance . . . It rested its entire reputation on inventing such fables as might preserve the gravity of the laws and do justice to the facts. Thus all the fictions of ancient jurisprudence were truths under masks . . .

1037. Thus all ancient Roman law was a serious poem, represented by the Romans in the forum, and ancient jurisprudence was a severe poetry . . . and from the masks called *personae* which were used in these dramatic fables, so true and severe, derive the first origins of the doctrine of the law of persons.

1038. With the coming of the human times of the popular commonwealths, the intellect was brought into play in the great assemblies, and universal legal concepts abstracted by the intellect were thereforth said to have their being in the understanding of the law.

1040. Now, because laws certainly came first and philosophies

later, it must have been from observing that the enactment of laws by the Athenian citizens involved their coming to agreement in an idea of an equal utility common to all of them severally, that Socrates began to adumbrate intelligible genera or abstract universals by induction . . .

## IX *The “Ricorso” or Theory of Recurrence*

1046. In countless passages scattered throughout this work and dealing with countless subjects, we have observed the marvelous correspondence between the first and the returned barbarian times. From these passages we can easily understand the recurrence of human things in the resurgence of the nations. For greater confirmation, however, we wish in this last book to give a special place to this argument. Thus we shall bring more light to bear on the period of the second barbarism, which has remained more obscure than that of the first . . . And we shall also show how the Best and Greatest God has made the counsels of His Providence, by which He has guided the human things of all nations, serve the ineffable decrees of His grace.

1047. When, working in superhuman ways, God had revealed and confirmed the truth of the Christian religion by opposing the virtue of the martyrs to the power of Rome, and the teaching of the Fathers, together with the miracles, to the empty wisdom of Greece, and when armed nations were about to arise on every hand destined to combat the true divinity of its Founder, He permitted a new order of humanity to emerge among the nations in order that [the true religion] might be firmly established according to the natural course of human affairs.

1048. Following this eternal counsel, He brought back the truly divine times, in which Catholic kings everywhere, in order to defend the Christian religion of which they are protectors, donned the dalmatics of deacons and consecrated their royal persons (whence they preserve the title Sacred Royal Majesty). They assumed ecclesiastical dignities, as Hugh Capet . . . took the title of Count and Abbot of Paris . . .

1049. Thus there was a return in truth of what were called the pure and pious wars of the heroic peoples . . .

1050. Amazing indeed is the recurrence of these civil human things in the returned barbarian times. The ancient heralds, for example, called out the gods from the cities on which they were declaring war, using the elegant and splendid formula preserved for us by Macrobius; for they believed that thereby the conquered peoples would be left without gods and hence without auspices . . . In the same way the latest barbarians in taking a city made it their principal concern to seek out and carry off famous remains or relics of saints . . . A trace of this custom survives in the rule by which conquered peoples must ransom from the victorious commanders all the bells of the cities they have taken.

1052. There was a return of certain kinds of divine judgments called "Canonical purgations." One kind of these judgments, as we have shown above was the duels of the first barbarian times, though these were not recognized by the sacred canons.

1053. There was a return of heroic raids. We saw above that, as the heroes had counted it an honor to be called robbers, so now it was a title of nobility to be a corsair.

1056. But the most striking recurrence of human things in this connection was the resumption in these divine times of the first asylums of the ancient world, within which, as we learned from Livy, all the first cities were founded. For everywhere violence, rapine and murder were rampant, because of the extreme ferocity and savagery of these most barbarous centuries. Nor, as we said in the Axioms [177] was there any efficacious way of restraining men who had shaken off all human laws save by the divine laws dictated by religion. Naturally, therefore, men in fear of being oppressed or destroyed betook themselves to the bishops and abbots of those violent centuries, . . . and put themselves, their families and their patrimonies under their protection, and were received by them . . .

1057. These divine times were followed by certain heroic times, in consequence of the return of a certain distinction between almost opposite natures, the heroic and the human . . .

1068. There was a return of the ancient Roman *clienteles* called *commendations*, so that the vassals, with Latin elegance and propriety, are called *clientes* by the learned feudists and the fiefs themselves are called *clientelae*.

1070. There was a return of the *precaria*, which must originally have been lands granted by the lords in response to the entreaties of the poor.

1083. From all the matters here enumerated, we must conclude that the [medieval] realms were everywhere aristocratic, we do not say in constitution but in government, as that of Poland still is . . .

1087. These last two forms of state [monarchy and commonwealth], since both involve human governments, readily admit of change from either to the other, but a return from either to an aristocratic state is almost impossible in the nature of civil things . . . For the plebeians, once they know themselves to be of equal nature with the nobles, naturally will not submit to remaining their inferiors in civil rights; and the equality they seek may be found either in free commonwealths or under monarchies. Wherefore, in the present humanity of the nations, the few remaining aristocratic commonwealths must take infinite pains and shrewd and prudent measures to keep the multitude at the same time dutiful and content.

1089. Today a complete humanity seems to be spread abroad through all nations, for a few great monarchs rule over this world of peoples. If there are still some barbarous peoples surviving, it is because their monarchies have persisted in the vulgar wisdom of imaginative and cruel religions, in some cases with the less balanced nature of their subject nations as an added factor.

1092. But in Europe, where the Christian religion is everywhere professed . . . there are great monarchies most humane in their customs. It is true that those situated in the cold north [Sweden and Denmark till recently; Poland and England still today] although they are monarchic in constitution yet seem to be governed aristocratically; but if the natural course of civil things is not impeded in their case by extraordinary causes they will arrive at perfect monarchies. In this part of the world alone,



because it cultivates the sciences, there are furthermore a great number of popular commonwealths, which are not found at all in the other three parts. Indeed, because of the recurrence of the same public utilities and necessities, there has been a revival of the form of the Aetolian and Achaean leagues. Just as the latter were conceived by the Greeks because of the necessity of protecting themselves against the overwhelming power of the Romans, so the Swiss cantons and the united provinces or states of Holland have organized a number of free popular cities into two aristocracies, in which they stand united in a perpetual league of peace and war. And the body of the German empire is a system of many free cities and sovereign princes. Its head is the emperor, and in matters concerning the states of the empire it is governed aristocratically.

1093. We must observe here that sovereign powers uniting in league, whether perpetual or temporary, come of themselves to form aristocratic states into which enter the anxious suspicions characteristic of aristocracies, as shown above. Hence, as this is the last form of civil states (for we cannot conceive in civil nature a state superior to such aristocracies), this same form must have been the first, which, as we have shown by so many proofs in this work, was that of the aristocracies of the fathers, sovereign family kings united in reigning orders in the first cities. For this is the nature of principles, that things begin and end in them.

1096. Now, in the light of the recurrence of human civil things to which we have given particular attention in this [fifth] book, let us reflect on the comparisons we have made throughout this work in a great many respects between the first and last times of the ancient and modern nations. There will then be fully unfolded, not the particular history in time of the laws and deeds of the Romans or the Greeks, but (in virtue of the substantial identity of meaning in the diversity of modes of expression) the ideal of the eternal laws in accordance with which the affairs of all nations proceed in their rise, progress, mature state, decline and fall, and would do so even if (as is certainly not the case) there were infinite worlds being born from time to time throughout eternity. Hence we could not refrain from giving this work the

invidious title of a New Science, for it was too much to defraud it unjustly of the rightful claim it had over an argument so universal as that concerning the common nature of nations, in virtue of that property which belongs to every science that is perfect in its idea . . .

## ***X Conclusion***

1108. It is true that men have themselves made this world of nations (and we took this as the first incontestable principle of our Science, since we despaired of finding it from the philosophers and philologists), but this world without doubt has issued from a mind often diverse, at times quite contrary, and always superior to the particular ends that men had proposed to themselves; which narrow ends, made means to serve wider ends, it has always employed to preserve the human race upon this earth. Men mean to gratify their bestial lust and abandon their offspring, and they inaugurate the chastity of marriage from which the families arise. The fathers mean to exercise without restraint their paternal power over their clients, and they subject them to the civil powers from which the cities arise. The reigning orders of nobles mean to abuse their lordly freedom over the plebeians, and they are obliged to submit to the laws which establish popular liberty. The free peoples mean to shake off the yoke of their laws, and they become subject to monarchs. The monarchs mean to strengthen their own positions by debasing their subjects with all the vices of dissoluteness, and they dispose them to endure slavery at the hands of stronger nations. The nations mean to dissolve themselves, and their remnants flee for safety to the wilderness, whence, like the phoenix, they rise again. That which did all this was mind, for men did it with intelligence; it was not fate, for they did it by choice; not chance, for the results of their always so acting are perpetually the same.

1109. Hence Epicurus, who believes in chance, is refuted by the facts, along with his followers Hobbes and Machiavelli; and so are Zeno and Spinoza, who believe in fate. The evidence is clearly in favor of the contrary position of the political philoso-

phers, whose prince is the divine Plato, who affirms that Providence rules the affairs of men. It was therefore with good reason that Cicero refused to discuss laws with Atticus unless the latter would give up his Epicureanism and first concede that Providence governed human affairs. Pufendorf ignored it in his hypothesis, Selden assumed it, and Grotius excluded it; but the Roman jurisconsults established it as the first principle of the natural law of nations. For in this work it has been fully demonstrated that through Providence the first governments of the world had as their entire form religion, on which alone the state of the families was based; and passing thence to the heroic or aristocratic civil governments, religion must have been their principal firm basis. Advancing then to the poplar governments, it was again religion that served the peoples as means for attaining them. And coming to rest at last in monarchic governments, this same religion must be the shield of princes. Hence, if religion is lost among the peoples, they have nothing left to enable them to live in society: no shield of defense, nor means of counsel, nor basis of support, nor even a form by which they may exist in the world at all.

1112. To sum up, from all that we have set forth in this work, it is to be finally concluded that this Science carries inseparably with it the study of piety, and that if one be not pious he cannot really be wise.

# 6

## *Johann Gottfried Herder*

(1744-1803)

The line from Vico to Herder was not so much strengthened as interrupted by the Enlightenment. Although the *Philosophes*' general criticism of the Establishment in church and state very much needed to be made, in historical thinking they represent a backward step, not a forward one. They were both too skeptical and not skeptical enough. Their scheme of history, whether in Hume, Voltaire or Condorcet, was a world of black and white, a secular eschatology, in which the zero-date would be at about the Renaissance. Before that time intelligent men looked backwards, to the classics; afterwards they looked forward, to the dawning age when hypocrisy and superstition would be done away and Reason make all things new. The only thing not explained was the central event that had made the change possible. Not all the Enlightened historians, of course, held such a theory, but it is the outline of the idea of history that the most influential of them put forward.



Philosophically this view was mainly based on empiricism, and particularly on Locke's environmentalism. If our minds at birth are blank slates and experience imprints all knowledge on them, then original sin is nonsense, but history must become more didactic than ever before in order to eradicate actual sin, namely the irrational errors which fill most of the past and which are the cause of all the social evil in mankind. This was a duty no Enlightened historian could escape, and they turned to it with a will. Their attitude to the history of Christianity, the chief form of irrationality, has the same calm impartiality as St. Augustine's treatment of pagan society.

The prevailing philosophy made one further point: human nature was fixed and unchanging. So, then, was the standard of what constituted civilization. Thus Reason and Happiness must be the same sort of thing in all societies, an absolute ideal—like St. Augustine's faith—toward which it was necessary to draw all men. But as time went on, it sometimes came to mean (as in Diderot and Rousseau) "behaving naturally," something a savage could do as well as a Parisian. The implication of this change in the meaning of "reasonable" or "according to nature" was overlooked by historians until the Romantics forcefully brought it to their attention.

The Romantics at the end of the century opposed such fixed standards, especially in Germany. Part of the reason may have been that there Romanticism coincided with a passionate movement towards self-identification which was denied political expression, and took a particular kind of literary and philosophical form. It began with the *Sturm und Drang* movement, of which Herder was the chief originator, and then split into Neo-classicism and Romanticism. Most German writers leaned toward Romanticism and reacted against the Enlightenment. Goethe became more and more classicist, and reacted against the Romantics. Herder, who was (most of the time) a close friend of Goethe, shared both views, but during his most creative period tended to be a Romantic.

A chief Romantic task was discovering self-identification in relation to history. If a writer's primary duty is to be true to

himself and his own age, where does the past fit in? The Middle Ages, a great German period, would help uncover true German-ness; but so would studying the Greeks, on whose surpassing and perhaps even Germanic virtues classicists and Romantics could agree. History was no longer a mainly irrational spectacle observed from the secure height of the Idea of Progress, but must have an inner meaning, a connection with Romantic ideals. Herder was the greatest German of his generation who tried to find out what it was.

The dichotomy in Herder's outlook began with his education. As an East Prussian he studied with Kant, who gave him Rousseau, Hume, Montesquieu and Buffon to read. But he also worked with J. G. Hamann, the "Magus of the North," who built up the literary and spontaneous side of his character. Eventually he became at least reasonably familiar with science, particularly psychology, geology, geography and anatomy, and mastered seven languages, with much of their literature. After a good deal of travel he settled in Weimar as court preacher in a sort of symbiosis with Goethe, each learning from the other, and both (but particularly the tense and irritable Herder) being alternately attracted and repelled.

Herder's ideas are even less neat and consistent than Vico's, partly because, in the Romantic manner, he kept changing his point of view. During middle life he particularly opposed Classicism. Most real classicists disliked history, which showed mostly a record of vice and folly at which a rational man might well shudder. To the *Aufklärung* (Enlightenment) there ought to be a set of principles for classifying the past, by which human irrationality could be shown as the cause of all misery. The rocks of tyranny, priestcraft, superstition and Unreason in general ought to be clearly marked by buoys.

For this pattern Herder, in his analysis of history, substituted several typically Romantic concepts—not fixed rules—that grew out of both his studies and his environment. Five stand out: irrationality, spontaneity, organic growth, group development, and Humanity. Most of these were used in various forms by other Romantics; Herder combined them more fully than anyone else.

Irrationality is his reaction against Pure Reason, cut-and-dried clarity, the consistency that pigeon-holed the richness of individual experience into fixed and rigid generalizations. Being irrational does *not* mean behaving passionately or irresponsibly; it means developing in one's own way, without being checked by unnatural restraints. "Unnatural" means "not according to one's particular genius." Spontaneity is part of the revolt against the age immediately preceding. To Herder what is real is not so much what is scientifically or philosophically demonstrable as what evolves, generation by generation, from the soul of a people, whose spirit or *Volksgeist* is the true creator of all culture in any form. Hence his love for primitive and pseudo-primitive literature, and his Vichian insistence on imaginative research into a people's *Volksgeist* as shown in epic poetry, ballads, legends and the like; also his hatred for neo-classic shams, polished elegiacs, and other fakery of a society that had wandered too far from its true basis. History is an especially good field for this sort of theory, because science deals with repeatable events, and historical events, which never really repeat themselves, can be treated in a more intuitive way.

A great scientific change differentiated his period from Vico's: the fastest-moving frontiers were no longer in physics but in geology and biology. In the same way, the Romantics, in their protest against the *Aufklärung*, turned from the analogy of a machine to describe either man or society toward that of an evolving organism, and none more than Herder, who applied genetic thinking to every aspect of culture. Society grows as a plant does, not rigidly but in an apparently random way, with offshoots, sidetracks and inexplicable pauses. The present was not a sharp break with the past, as Enlightened writers had implied, but a normal and developing continuation of it. This led to his ecological insistence on the group as the means through which an individual expressed himself. Before his time liberty had implied *individual* liberty: the individual was the reality in an atomic society, and the group that enfolded him was an abstraction. To Herder the group, all of whose members depend on it as plants depend on their environment, is the reality, and a sep-

arated individual is the abstraction. Culture is not merely an organism; it is an expression of group life, and the group is the means through which an individual can express himself most fully. But as an individual reflects the structure of his group and can only act within the limitations it imposes, so groups are themselves treated as larger individuals, both in their particularity and spontaneity, and in their growth, flowering and decay.

The best kind of group is a nation, which is the political expression of a *Volksgeist*. History is not the story of individual humans, but of these individually evolving social units. No one standard can be used to judge them all, because each must be free to express its potentialities in its own way: thus the Enlightened equivalence of "civilization" and "18th century northwest European polite culture" is absurd. The Romans were not trying to be Greeks and failing, nor should Germans, whose culture is nothing to be ashamed of, ape the French. This is an extension of Vico's idea of the separate development of peoples under Providence, but it is carried a great deal further: the concept of the nation not only as the group through which the individual expresses himself, but as a teleological unit whose development drives history forward is basic to Herder's teaching. The collective story of these more or less national groups, each of which has its own personality, is the history of the human race.

Toward what does history drive? Herder is not clear: history is like a play (he was a great admirer of Shakespeare) whose outcome the actors do not know, but whose author they can trust to tie the threads of plot together. The goal is in man's full development of all his potentialities. Man is a partly natural and partly supernatural being, who strives to fulfill the purpose for which God put him on earth. This purpose Herder calls "Humanity," which is in fact the central concept of the book, but which is never really defined: to define it might have been to put limits to its spontaneity and growth. Humanity is, paradoxically, the divinity in man, the summit of what he was divinely intended to achieve. It is Herder's substitute for the Idea of Progress, which is not in itself a particularly rational idea, but had been used too much by the rationalists to make him really at home with it. Its



highest expression is Christianity, not in its dogmatic forms, for which Herder has nothing but scorn (although he was a Lutheran minister), but as an ideal. This ideal Christianity will, in the Deist manner, look for God not merely in the written records of the Bible, but in the living records of the universe, which is teleological and shows Him everywhere. History, as in Vico, is theology in practice, the knowledge of God in His works.

But this poses another problem: only a higher organism is capable of freedom at all. The more such an organism (whether human or social) develops the capacities its environment allows, the more freedom—and individuality—it presumably has. But the trouble is that a system that posits both environmental conditioning and purposive direction cannot avoid placing severe limitations on the freedom it is presumably progressively developing toward. How can a framework of determined and necessary stages require limitation, and at the same time total unfolding purpose require unlimited growth toward freedom—especially when the whole framework presumably has been designed, in its future as well as past stages, by the same Power that imposed the limitations in the first place? The answer, as so often in Herder, is not apparent.

This is all worked out in the *Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Mankind*, the first part of which appeared in 1784, and which contains the best of Herder's thought. Following his genetic idea, he begins Part I (Books I-V) not with any Biblical event but with the astronomical universe, descending through geology and biology to anthropology and finally showing man as the climax of all created species. Part II (Books VI-X) reaches to the beginning of recorded history and gives Herder a chance to develop two favorite themes: primitive people are neither necessarily oafish nor less happy than polished Europeans; and primitive men, like cultured ones, can become only what their physical and cultural environment allows them to. As these men grow, so do their social structures. Neither men nor structures develop towards abstract Reason, but always toward Humanity, i.e. the fullest use of all their particular possibilities.

Parts III (Books XI-XV) and IV (XVI-XX) are less successful,

partly because Herder was trying to write philosophy of history and narrative history at the same time, and found that later peoples did not fit his scheme as well as the earlier ones. Part III deals with the ancient Oriental and Mediterranean civilizations. The sections on India and China are vague, but that on the Hebrews, whom Bodin and Vico had carefully exempted from historical laws, is not: his astringent remarks about them probably cost him a chair at the University of Göttingen. His favorite people are the Greeks, whose civilization stands so high because they alone were able to fulfill all the potentialities their environment made possible before their growth was interrupted. Greek art was so good partly because it was interwoven with folk-culture, Greek government because it encouraged individual participation to an extent unknown anywhere else in antiquity. The Romans, on the other hand, developed Humanity in a different direction: they represent less a principle of growth than one of destruction. Their environment forced them to stay armed, and eventually to become an imperialistic power, in which role they crushed several other growing cultures. Part IV (from the fall of Rome to the Middle Ages) is an epilogue. To Herder, like Vico, the post-classical ages are relatively dull. Part of the reason may have been Herder's own unsureness of where his own age was leading: Part IV was written during the French Revolution, which to many of its contemporaries started as a liberal triumph and ended as a bloody catastrophe.

The *Ideas* contains all Herder's basic thought about philosophy of history. In addition to the general Romantic concepts he shared, he developed a number of his own. His major premise is that everything that can happen, does, given the limitations of time and place. This is developed through several ideas. For instance, there is no single historical center of gravity or standard of judgment: every culture has its own. The Roman center of gravity is strength and manliness, and that of the Middle Ages is the "Gothic Spirit." The total contribution of each culture can be seen in terms of this guiding principle, but no civilization can be assessed in terms of the guiding principle of any other. This suggests a second rule, the essential incomparability of civilizations.

Each one is both unique and irrecoverable, a self-contained entity which it is foolish for another culture to try to imitate. A third is the idea of movement in history, from childhood in the Orient through youth in Greece and maturity in Rome, which implied that the Middle Ages were senile, an idea Herder did not care to adopt. Thus he changed the analogy to plant life, suggesting that civilization was like a tree, of which modern societies were branches.

The point is that something in a culture is always in motion, striving to actualize its potentialities. This striving is neither conscious nor rational, nor is it towards any particular goal, save Humanity. No cultural climax in a civilization lasts long, because a great period, for example Periclean Athens, rests only on a temporary balance of opposing forces; but the good always, in being overcome, makes the development of some other future good possible. The movement goes on by a process of friction, with constantly shifting balances and imbalances, a suggestion Herder does not develop in detail, but which Hegel later made a central idea. But none of this is worked out very carefully. Like so many philosophers of history, Herder is surpassingly rich in brilliant suggestion, and wretchedly poor in quantitative analysis. The whole tone the work leaves is one of incompleteness, hardly startling since it was unfinished.

Although Herder apparently was familiar with Vico's teaching only at second hand, both the resemblances and differences between them are striking. One difference is that Herder's religion is a great deal more critical than Vico's: while Herder agrees that civilization began with religion, he despises the part religious leaders have played during most of the period since. Another is that Herder's theory is based not on a legal and philological view of society but on a scientific one, even though it is used in a most unscientific way. A third is that Herder is not interested in historical thinking *per se*, although nothing is clearer than that he regards it as a partly intuitive activity, not a wholly rational one. But the most difficult point is in the relation between Providence and Progress. To Vico, "Humanity" is a sign of the third, skeptical age of history; to Herder it is teleological. The growth of

Humanity implies that amid the rise and fall of civilizations a kind of progress is occurring. But this attitude is hard to reconcile with another one, which is that the happiness of a later generation cannot, under a scheme which takes Providence seriously, be built on the ruins and miseries of its predecessors. The problem had not occurred in this form before, because most historians either believed in Providence and not Progress (like Vico) or in Progress and not Providence (like Hume). Herder, who believed in both, did not solve it.

The resemblances to Vico include the whole Lockian environmentalist idea, seen in germ in Bodin and later flowering in the 19th century the insistence that every culture is a whole and must be judged by its own standards, not ours; and the development of a philosophy of history not from politics but from a theory of language, whose origins, growing from folk and soil, are collective and unrational. Herder seems to despise political history. They agree that every culture passes from simplicity to over-refinement, given enough time. And together with Bodin, their world is purposive, although the purpose does not work in a specifically Christian way.

Herder's influence among his contemporaries, unlike Vico's, was enormous. The German Romantics admired the *Ideas* hugely, even thought Kant, a thorough rationalist, attacked it at once. The fact that it is not overly rational was in no way a barrier, because the Romantics were not looking for sound logic in any case. But the trouble is that by the time the work became really influential, Herder, torn between alternatives as usual, had swung back toward classicism again. Fortunately the Romantics were able to overlook this.

The *Ideas* never has been read very widely in Anglo-Saxon countries, both because it is so very German and because the science on which so much of it is based became dated so fast. Where it has been read, usually it has been misunderstood, particularly in its discussion of Germans. Herder was no advocate of racism, in spite of Collingwood's insistence to the contrary.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (New York: Oxford University Press 1946), p. 92.



Nowhere is there any suggestion of a natural or political supremacy of German over non-German peoples. Herder does not talk about pure Aryan blood at all, but about a fresh uncivilized impulse, i.e. a new people overcoming a senile one. A race is only good insofar as it contains Humanity, which is shared by all races. On the other hand, Herder is certainly part of the contemporary movement toward fresh German self-confidence. While he obviously detests despotic governments and all forms of imperialism, he does want a greater future for his people.

Although the book is useless today in much of its content, it cannot be avoided by serious students of philosophy of history. Herder is a seminal figure: he stands exactly at the transition from the *Aufklärung* to Romanticism, and the *Ideas* includes a great many elements of both outlooks. He at least raises, even if he does not solve, several of the problems that arise between a theory of history and a scientific view of nature. It is Herder more than anyone else who substituted the examination of continuity for the demonstration of Reason as the chief purpose in studying history. He is not, as Cassirer thought, the "Copernicus of History," even though he stresses a form of cultural relativism; if anyone deserves that title it is Vico. It is possible to argue, with Croce, that he is the founder of modern philosophy of history, but better to say that he is one of the originators of the German tradition of historical explanation that leads directly to Hegel, and through him to modern thought.

## READINGS<sup>2</sup>

### *I Man's Place in the Universe*

At an early age, when the dawn of science appeared to my sight, the thought frequently occurred to me

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<sup>2</sup> The selections are adapted, and the wording slightly modernized, from T. Churchill's translation of Herder's *Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit*, entitled *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (London, 1800).

whether, since everything in the world has its philosophy and science, there must not also be a philosophy and science of what concerns us most, the history of mankind. Everything forced this on my mind: metaphysics and morals, physics and natural history, and religion above all. Shall He who has ordered everything in nature, I asked myself, by number, weight and measure; who has regulated according to them the essence of things, their forms and relations, their course and subsistence, so that only one wisdom, goodness and power, prevails from the system of the universe to the grain of sand, from the power that supports the worlds and suns to the texture of a spider's web; who has so wonderfully and divinely weighted everything in our body and in the faculties of our mind that, when we try to reflect on the only-wise even the least bit, we lose ourselves in an abyss of his purposes; would that God depart from his wisdom and goodness in the general destiny of our species, and act in them without a plan? Or can he have intended to keep us in ignorance of this, while he has displayed to us so much of his eternal purpose in the lower part of the creation, in which we are much less concerned? (Preface)



If our philosophy of the history of man is in any way to deserve its name, it must begin from heaven. For as our dwelling, the earth, is in itself nothing, but derives its structure and constitution, its power of forming organized beings, and preserving them, when formed, from the heavenly powers that pervade the whole universe, so we must first consider it not only by itself, but as part of the system of the worlds in which it is placed . . . When I open the great book of the universe and see before me an immense palace, which the Deity alone can fill in every part, I reason as closely as I can from the whole to its parts, and from its parts to the whole . . . All being is alike an indivisible idea; in the greatest, as well as the least things, it is founded on the same laws. Thus the structure of the universe confirms the eternity of the core of my being, of my intrinsic life. Wherever or whatever I may be, I shall be, as I now am, a power in the universal system

of powers, a being in the inconceivable harmony of some world of God. (Book I, Chapter 1)

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I wish I could extend the meaning of the word "humanity" to include everything I have said so far on the noble conformation of man to reason and liberty, to finer senses and appetites, the most delicate yet strong health, and the population and rule of the earth; for man has no more dignified word for his destiny than what expresses himself. In him the image of the Creator lives imprinted as visibly as it can be here. Man's structure is less adapted for attack than defense, since he needs the assistance of skill, in which he is by nature the most powerful creature on earth. Thus his very form teaches him to live in peace, not to addict himself to deeds of blood and rapine; and this constitutes the first characteristic of humanity. (IV,6)

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Everything in nature is connected: one state pushes forward and prepares another. If then man is the last and highest link, closing the chain of earthly organization, he must begin the chain of a higher order of creatures as its lowest link, and is thus probably the middle ring between two adjoining systems of the creation . . . This view, which is supported by all the laws of nature, gives us the key to the wonderful phenomenon of man, and at the same time to the only philosophy of his history.

Thus the singular inconsistency of man's condition becomes clear. As an animal he tends to the earth, and is attached to it as his habitation; as a man he has within him the seeds of immortality, which must be planted in another soil. His situation, since it is the last on this earth, is the first in another sphere of existence, with respect to which he appears here as a child making his first attempts. Thus he is the representative of two worlds at once, and hence the apparent ambiguity of his nature . . .

Since therefore we are of a middle species between two orders, and in some ways partake of both, I cannot conceive that the future state is so remote from the present, and so incommunicable

with it, as the animal part of man is apt to suppose, and indeed, many steps and events in the history of the human race are incomprehensible without the operation of higher influence. For instance, that man should have made his own improvement possible, and invented language and the first science without higher guidance, appears to me inexplicable; and the more so, the longer he is supposed to have remained in a rude animal state. A divine guidance has certainly ruled over the human species from its origin, and led him into his course the best way. But the more the human powers have been exercised, the less they required this higher assistance, or the less they were influenced by it; though more recently the greatest events have arisen in the world from inexplicable causes, or have been accompanied with circumstances we cannot explain. (V,6)

## *II The Individual and the Group*

How can it be that man, as we know him here, should have been formed for an infinite improvement of his mental faculties, a progressive extension of his perceptions and actions? How could he have been made for the state as the end of his species, and all preceding generations properly for the last alone, which is to be enthroned on the ruined scaffolding of the happiness of its predecessors? The sight of our fellow-creatures, even the experience of every individual life, contradicts this plan attributed to creative Providence. Neither our head nor our heart is formed for an infinitely increasing supply of thought and feelings; our hand is not made, nor is our life calculated for it. Do not our finest mental powers decay, as well as flourish? . . .

It is still less comprehensible how man should be made for the state, so that his first true happiness must necessarily spring from its constitution; for how many people on earth are entirely ignorant of all government, and yet are happier than many who have sacrificed themselves for the good of the state? I will not discuss the benefits or harm this artificial form of society brings with it; but it may be observed that as every skill is merely an instrument, and the most complicated instrument necessarily re-



quires the most prudence and delicacy in managing it, that this is an obvious consequence: with the greatness of a state and the intricate skill of its constitution the danger of making individuals miserable is infinitely increased. In large states hundreds must pine with hunger, so that one can feast and carouse; thousands are oppressed and hunted to death, so that one crowned fool or philosopher can gratify his whims. As all politicians say that every well-constituted state must be a machine regulated only by the will of one, what increase of happiness can it give anyone to serve in this machine as a thoughtless member? . . . If we are men, let us thank Providence that this was not made the general destiny of mankind. Millions on this globe live without government; and must not every one of us, even under the most perfect government, if he wishes to be happy, begin where the savage begins, trying to acquire and maintain health of body and soundness of mind, the happiness of his house and of his heart, not from the state but from himself? . . .

Providence was kind and considerate to prefer the easier happiness of individuals to the artificial ends of great societies, and spare generations these costly machines of state as much as possible . . . No Nimrod has yet been able to drive all the inhabitants of the world into one park for himself and his successors; and though it has been for centuries the object of united Europe to erect herself into a despot, compelling all the nations of the Earth to be happy in her way, this happiness-dispensing deity is still far from having obtained her end. (VIII,5)

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Man is an artificial machine, endued with a genetic nature and fulness of life; but the machine does not work itself, and the ablest men must learn how to work it. Reason is an aggregate of the experiences and observations of the mind, the sum of the education of man, which the pupil ultimately finishes in himself as an extraneous artist, following certain extraneous models.

In this lies the principle of the history of mankind, without which no such history could exist. If man had received everything from himself, and developed everything independently of ex-

ternal circumstances, we might have a history of an individual indeed, but not of the species. But, as our specific character lies in the fact that, although born almost without instinct, we are formed to manhood only by the practice of a whole life, and both the perfectibility and corruptibility of our species depend on it, the history of mankind is necessarily a whole, i.e. a chain of sociability and plastic tradition, from the first link to the last.

There is an education, therefore, of the human species, since everyone becomes a man only by education, and the whole species lives solely in this chain of individuals. If anyone should say that the species is educated, not the individual, he would speak unintelligibly, for species and genus are only abstract ideas, except so far as they exist in individuals. . . .

Our philosophy of history will not wander in this path of the Averroist system, according to which the whole human species possesses but one mind, and that of a very low order, distributed to individuals only piecemeal. On the other hand, were I to confine everything to the individual, and deny the existence of the chain that connects each to others and to the whole, I should run equally counter to the nature of man and his evident history, for no one of us became man by himself: the whole structure of his humanity is connected by a spiritual birth, education, with his parents, teachers, friends; with all the circumstances of his life, and consequently with his countrymen and their forefathers; and lastly with the whole chain of the human species, some link or other of which is continually acting on his mental faculties. Thus nations may be traced up to families; families to their founders: the stream of history contracts itself as we approach its source, and all our habitable earth is ultimately converted into the school of our family, containing indeed many divisions, classes, and chambers, but still with one plan of instruction, which has been transmitted from our ancestors, with various alterations and additions, to all their race. Now if we give the limited understanding of a teacher credit for not having made a separate division of his scholars without some grounds, and perceive that the human species everywhere finds a kind of artificial education, adapted to the wants of the time and place: what man of under-

standing, who contemplates the structure of our Earth, and the relation man bears to it, would not be likely to think that the father of our race, who has determined how far and wide nations should spread, has also determined this, as the general teacher of us all? . . . There appears to me to be an education of our species, and a philosophy of the history of man, as certainly and as truly as there is a human nature, i.e. a cooperation of individuals, which alone makes us man . . .

The philosophy of history which follows the chain of tradition is, to speak properly, the true history of mankind, without which all the outward occurrences of this world are only clouds or revolting deformities. It is a gloomy outlook if we can see nothing in the revolutions of our earth but wreck upon wreck, external beginnings without end, channels of circumstances without any fixed purpose. The chain of improvement alone forms a whole out of these ruins, in which human figures indeed vanish, but the spirit of mankind lives and acts immortally . . . Thus the changeable form and imperfection of all human operations entered into the plan of the creator. Folly had to appear, so that wisdom could surmount it; the decaying fragility even of the noblest works was an essential property of their materials, so that men might have an opportunity to work harder in improving or building on their ruins; for we are all here in a state of exercise. (IX,1)

### *III The Foundations of Society*

The natural state of man is society, for in it he is born and brought up and to it he is led by the awakening characteristics of his youth; and the affectionate names of father, son, brother, sister, lover, friend, are ties of the law of Nature, which exist in every primitive society. On them the first governments were founded; family regulations, without which the species could not subsist; laws, which Nature gave, and sufficiently limited. We will call this the first step of natural government, and it will always remain the highest and the last.

Here Nature ended her foundations of society, and left it to the reason or necessities of men to build higher structures on them. In

all these regions where particular tribes and races have the need of each other's assistance, they concern themselves less about each other, and in consequence have never thought of founding one large political association. Such are the coasts inhabited by fishermen, the pastures of the shepherd, the forests of the hunter: in these, where paternal and domestic government ceases, further connection between men is founded chiefly on compact, or on some office conferred . . . Such an establishment we will call the second step of natural government: it is to be found among all people who care for nothing but the supply of their wants, and live, as we call it, in the state of nature. Even the elected judge of a nation belongs to this step of government; for the wisest and best man is chosen to this post as if to an office, and with the carrying-out of his office his sovereignty ends.

But how different it is with the third step, hereditary government! . . . Forcible conquest has assumed the place of right, and has afterwards become law by course of years, or as our politicians phrase it, by a tacit compact: but the compact in this case is nothing more than that the stronger takes what he wants, and the weaker gives up what he cannot preserve, or endures what he cannot avoid. Thus the right of hereditary government depends, like almost every other hereditary possession, on a chain of traditions, the first link of which was forged by force or accident, and which has been drawn out occasionally, it is true, by wisdom and goodness, but for the most part either by fortune or force.

The most famous names in history are those of murderers of mankind, crowned or crown-seeking executioners: and what is still more lamentable, the worthiest men have often been compelled by necessity to appear on the dark scaffold where the chains of their brethren were forged. Why is it that the history of kingdoms displays so few rational purposes? Because the greatest and most of their events did not originate from any rational views; for the passions, not humanity, have overpowered the earth, and urged its people like wild beasts against each other. Had it pleased Providence to permit us to be governed by superior beings, how different would the history of man have ap-



peared! But instead of this, they have been mostly heroes, i.e. ambitious men, who had power, or were clever and enterprising, who have spun the thread of events guided by passion, and woven as it pleased fate. If nothing else in the history of the world indicated the inferiority of the human race, the history of governments would demonstrate it . . . (IX,4)

#### *IV The Function of Religion in Early Societies*

Tradition has been the propagator of religion and sacred rites . . . among the most barbarous people, the language of religion is always the most ancient and obscure; often unintelligible even to the initiated, much more so to strangers. The most expressive sacred symbols of every people, however exactly adapted to a climate and nation, frequently become meaningless in a few generations. And no wonder, for this happens to every language and to every institution with arbitrary characters, unless they are often compared with their objects by common use, and thus kept in significant memory. In religion this actual comparison is difficult, if not impracticable, for the symbol refers either to an invisible idea, or to a long-past series of events.

Thus inevitably priests, the original philosophers of a nation, could not always remain so: for as soon as the significance of the symbols was lost to them, they had to become either the blind servants of idolatry, or the lying preachers of superstition. And so they have richly proved themselves almost everywhere; not from any particular aptitude for deception, but from the natural course of things. In language, in every science, in every art and institution, the same destiny prevails; the ignorant, who try to speak or teach an art, must conceal, feign and dissemble; a false appearance takes the place of lost truth. This is the history of all the mysteries on earth; at first they concealed much that was well worthy of being known; but in the end, particularly when the wisdom of men separated itself from them, they degenerated into despicable nonsense; and thus, when the sanctuary was reduced to an empty shell, the priests at length became wretched deceivers.

Those by whom the priests were chiefly exposed as such were the princes and philosophers. The princes, soon led by their high rank—in which all power was vested—to the uncontrolled exercise of their own will, thought it a duty of their rank to restrain an invisible superior power, and consequently to annihilate its symbols, or tolerate them as wires to move the puppet people. Hence the unhappy conflict between the throne and the altar in all half-civilized nations, till men at last attempted to unite them, and thus produced the incongruous structure of a throne on the altar, or an altar on the throne. In this unequal contest, the degenerate priests necessarily continued to lose ground; for invisible belief had to contend against visible power, and the shadow of an ancient tradition against the splendor of the golden sceptre which the priests themselves had formerly consecrated and placed in the hand of the monarch. Thus with increasing civilization the days of priestly dominion passed away; the despot who originally wore his crown in the name of the deity now found it more easy to support it in his own name, and the people were accustomed to it both by the sovereign and the philosopher.

It is unquestionable that religion alone introduced the first rudiments of civilization and science among all people; indeed, these rudiments were originally nothing more than a kind of religious tradition. The little civilization and science in all savage nations, even at present, are connected with their religion; . . . it is accordingly the only relic these people have of ancient history, their sole memorial of antiquity, their single glimmer of science. (IX,5)

## *V The Laws of History*

What is the chief law we have observed in all the great occurrences of history? In my opinion it is this: everywhere on our earth whatever could be has been, according to the situation and wants of the place, the circumstances and occasions of the times, and the native or generated character of the people. Admit active human powers, in a fixed relation both to the age and to their place on the earth, and all the changes

and chances in the history of mankind will ensue. Here kingdoms and states crystallize into shape; there they dissolve, and assume other forms . . . Time, place, and national character alone, in short the general cooperation of active powers in their most definite individuality, govern all the events that happen among mankind, as well as all the occurrences in nature. Let us place this predominant law of creation in a suitable light.

1. Active human powers are the springs of human history; and as man originates from and in one race, his structure, education and mode of thinking are thus genetic. Hence that striking national character which, deeply imprinted on the most ancient people, is plainly displayed in all their actions . . . If every one of these [ancient] nations had remained in its place, the earth might have been like a garden, where in one spot one human national plant, in another, another kind, bloomed in its proper structure and nature . . .

But as men are not firmly rooted plants, the calamities of famine, earthquakes, war, and so on, must in time remove them from their place to some other more or less different. And though they might cling to the manners of their forefathers with an obstinacy almost equal to the instinct of the brutes, and even call their new mountains, rivers, towns, and establishments by the names of their primitive land, it would be impossible for them to remain eternally the same in every respect, under any considerable change of soil and climate . . . Thus even in unmixed nations the computations of history are so confusing, because of geographical and political conditions, that it requires a mind wholly free from hypothesis to trace the clue. This clue is most easily lost by one with whom a particular race is a favorite, and who despises everything in which this race has no concern. The historian of mankind must see with eyes as impartial as those of the creator of the human race, or the genius of the earth, and judge completely without bias.

2. If the quality of a kingdom thus depends chiefly on the time and place in which it arose, the parts that composed it, and the external circumstances it was surrounded by, we can see that the major part of its fate springs from these things too. A monarchy

set up by wandering tribes, whose political system is a continuation of their former mode of life, will scarcely last long; it ravages and subjugates, till at last it is itself destroyed; the capture of the metropolis, or frequently the death of a king alone, is sufficient to drop the curtain on the predatory scene.

It is not so with states which springing up from a root, rest on themselves; they may be subdued, but the nation remains. Thus it is with China [and other Oriental states]. Hence we can infer the reason why ancient political constitutions laid so much stress on the formation of manners by education; their internal strength depended wholly on it. Modern kingdoms are built on money or on mechanical politics, the ancient ones on the general way of thinking of a nation from its infancy; and as nothing has a greater influence on children than religion, most of the ancient states, particularly those of Asia, were more or less theocratic . . . This form of government is not only adapted to the infancy of the human race, but necessary to it; otherwise it would neither have extended so far, nor have maintained itself so long. And as every religion is more successful politically the more its objects, its gods and heroes, and their various actions, are indigenous, so we find that every firmly rooted ancient nation has adapted its cosmology and mythology to the country it inhabited.

3. Finally, we see how transitory all human structures are, and how oppressive the best institutions become in the course of a few generations. The plant blossoms and fades; your fathers have died and mouldered into dust . . . can a political constitution, a system of government or religion, erected solely on them, endure for ever? . . . Tradition itself is an excellent institution of nature, indispensable to the human race; but when it fetters the intellect both in politics and education, and prevents all progress of the mind and all the improvements that new times and circumstances demand, it is the real narcotic of the mind, to nations and sects as well as to individuals. (XII,6)

## *VI The Development of Greece*

The philosophy of history belongs particularly to Greece, for the Greeks alone possessed real history. The orientals



had their genealogies and fables, the northern nations their tales, others their poems; the Greeks in time formed, from tales, poems, fables and genealogies, the sound body of a narrative, through all the parts of which the current of vitality flows. Here, too, its ancient poetry led the way, for it is not easy to relate a fable in a more pleasing way than was done in the epic poem; the division of the subject into rhapsodies began similar pauses in history, and the long hexameter was well adapted soon to form the melody of historical prose. Thus Herodotus succeeded Homer, and the subsequent historians of the commonwealths introduced their coloring, the spirit of republican oratory, into their narration. Since with Thucydides and Xenophon Greek history began in Athens, and the writers themselves were statesmen and generals, their history naturally became a collection of facts and reasoning from them without any attempt to give them this philosophical form. The public orations, the intricacy of Greek affairs, the lively appearance of events and their motives, prompted such a form. Indeed, no philosophical history would have been known to the world had the Greek republics never existed. In proportion as military skill and the science of politics developed, the philosophical spirit of history became more elaborate, till at length it became in the hands of Polybius almost the sciences of war and politics themselves. In models of this kind subsequent thinkers had ample material for their remarks, and the Dionysiuses had certainly fuller opportunities to acquire the rudiments of history than a Chinese, a Jew, or even a Roman could have had. (XIII,5)

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[The history of Greece serves fairly well] as a general basis for a philosophy of history in all countries. The Greeks not only remained free from any mingling with foreign nations, so that their progress has been entirely their own; but they filled up their period so perfectly, and passed through every stage of civilization, from its slightest beginnings to its completion, that no other nation can be compared with them. The peoples of the continent have either stopped at the rudiments of civilization, and unnaturally perpetuated them by the laws and customs, or become a prey to

conquest before they had advanced beyond them; the blossom withered before it was blown. Greece, on the contrary, enjoyed its full time: it formed everything it was capable of forming, and a lucky combination of circumstances aided it in its progress to perfection. On the continent undoubtedly it would soon have fallen a victim to some conqueror, like its Asiatic brethren; had Darius and Xerxes accomplished their designs, the age of Pericles would never have appeared. Or had a despot ruled over the Greeks, he would soon have become himself a conqueror, as all despots do, and, like Alexander, have empurpled distant rivers with Greek blood. Foreign nations would have been brought into their country, and their victories would have dispersed them through foreign lands. From all this they were protected by the mediocrity of their power, and even their limited commerce, which never ventured beyond the pillars of Hercules and of Fortune. As the botanist cannot obtain a complete knowledge of a plant unless he follows it from the seed through its germination, blossoming and decay, such is Greek history to us. (XIII,7)

## ***VII Principles Observed in Greece Applied to History in General***

Here I must repeat the first great principle: Whatever can take place among mankind, within the framework of given circumstances of time, place, and nation, actually does take place. Of this Greece gives us the fullest proofs.

In natural philosophy we never count on miracles: we observe laws, which we see everywhere equally effective, undeviating and regular. Will man, with his powers, changes and passions, burst these chains of nature? Had Greece been peopled with Chinese, our Greece would never have existed; had our Greeks remained where Darius led the enslaved Eretrians, they would have formed no Athens, nor produced a Sparta. Look at Greece now: the ancient Greeks have disappeared . . . but as the modern Greeks have become what they are only by the course of time, through a given series of causes and effects, so did the ancient; the same with every other nation on earth. The whole history of mankind

is a pure natural history of human powers, actions and aptitudes, modified by time and place.

This principle is just as simple as it is suggestive and useful in discussing the history of nations. Every historian agrees with me that a barren recital does not deserve the name of history; and if this is just, the examining mind use all its acumen on every historical event, just as on a natural phenomenon. Thus in the narration of history it will seek the strictest truth, and in forming its conceptions and judgments, the most complete connection; it should never attempt to explain a thing which is, or happens, by a thing which is not. With this rigorous principle, everything ideal, all the phantoms of a magic creation, will vanish. It will try to see simply what is, and as soon as this is seen, the causes why it could not be otherwise will usually appear. As soon as the mind has acquired this habit in history, it will have found the way to the kind of sound philosophy which rarely occurs except in natural history and mathematics.

This philosophy will first and foremost guard us from attributing the facts in history to the particular hidden purposes of a scheme of things unknown to us, or the magic influence of invisible powers. Fate reveals its purposes through the events that occur, and as they occur: accordingly, the investigator of history develops these purposes merely from what is before him, and what displays itself in its whole extent. Why did the enlightened Greeks appear in the world? Because Greeks existed, and existed under such circumstances that they could not be otherwise than enlightened. Why did Alexander invade India? Because he was Alexander, the son of Philip; and from the dispositions his father had made, the deeds of his nation, his age and character, his readings of Homer, and so on, knew nothing better that he could undertake. But if we attribute his bold resolution to the sacred purposes of some higher power, and his heroic achievements to his peculiar fortune, we run the risk of either exalting his most senseless and atrocious actions into designs of the Deity, or of detracting from his personal courage and military skill, while we deprive the whole occurrence of its natural form. Anyone who takes with him into natural history the

fairy belief that invisible sylphs tinge the rose, or hang its cup with pearly dewdrops, and that little spirits of light encase themselves in the body of the glow-worm, or flirt on the peacock's tail, may be an ingenious poet, but will never shine as a naturalist or historian. History is the science of what is, not of what possibly may be according to the hidden designs of fate.

Secondly, what is true of one people holds equally true with regard to the joining of several together. They are joined as time and place unite them, and they act on each other as the combination of active powers directs.

The Greeks have been acted on by the Asiatics, and the Asiatics reacted on by the Greeks. They have been conquered by Romans, Goths, Christians, and Turks; and Romans, Goths and Christians have derived from them various means of improvement. How are these things consistent? Through place, time, and the natural operation of active powers. The Phoenicians imparted the use of letters to the Greeks, but they had not invented letters for them; they imparted them by sending a colony into Greece . . .

Thirdly, the cultivation of a people is the flower of its existence; its display is pleasant, but transitory. As man, when he comes into the world, knows nothing, but has all his knowledge to learn, so an uncultivated people acquires knowledge from its own practice, or from intercourse with others. But every kind of human knowledge has its particular circle, i.e. its nature, time, place, and periods of life. The cultivation of Greece, for example, grew with time, place and circumstances, and declined with them. Poetry and certain arts preceded philosophy; where oratory or the fine arts flourished, neither the patriotic virtues nor martial spirit could shine with their highest splendor. The orators of Athens displayed the greatest enthusiasm when the state drew near its end, and its integrity was no more.

But all kinds of human knowledge have one thing in common: each aims at a point of perfection, but when it is attained by a chain of fortunate circumstances, it can neither preserve it forever, nor can it instantly return, without a decreasing series starting. Every perfect work, as far as perfection can be required from man, is the highest of its kind; nothing, therefore, can possi-



bly succeed it, except mere imitations, or unsuccessful attempts to excel. When Homer had sung, no second Homer in the same path could be conceived. He plucked the flower of the epic garland, and all who followed had to content themselves with a few leaves . . . Thus it was with every kind of Greek art, and thus it will be in all nations; the very fact that the Greeks in their most flourishing periods understood this law of nature, and did not try to go beyond the highest in something still higher, made their taste so sure, and its development so many-sided.

It would be poor and unworthy if our attachment to any object of human culture prescribed that Providence must confer an unnatural eternity on the moment in which alone [the object of culture] could take place. Such a wish would be nothing less than to annihilate the essence of time, and destroy the infinity of all nature. Our youth does not return again, and neither does the action of our mental faculties as they then were. The very appearance of the flower is a sign that it must fade, because it has drawn to itself the powers of the plant from the very root; and when it dies, the death of the plant must follow. It would have been unfortunate if the age that produced a Pericles and a Socrates could have been prolonged a moment beyond the time which the chain of events prescribed for its duration; for Athens it would have been a perilous and unsupportable period . . . Every plant in nature must fade, but the fading plant scatters abroad its seeds, and thus renovates the living creation. Shakespeare was no Sophocles, Milton no Homer, Bolingbroke no Pericles; yet they were in their way and in their situation what their predecessors were in theirs. Everyone, therefore, should strive in his own situation to be what he can in the course of things. This he will be, and to be anything else is impossible.

Fourthly: the health and duration of a state do not rest on the point of its highest cultivation, but on a wise or fortunate equilibrium of its active living powers. The deeper in this living exertion its center of gravity lies, the more firm and durable it is.

On what did the ancient founders of states calculate? Neither on lethargy nor on extreme activity; but on order, and a proper distribution of never slumbering, always vigilant powers. The

principle of these sages was genuine human wisdom, learned from nature. Whenever a state was pushed to its utmost point, even though by a man of the greatest stature, and under the most flattering pretext, it was in danger of ruin, and recovered its former estate only by some lucky violence. Thus when Greece entered the lists with Persia, it was when on the brink of catastrophe; when Athens, Lacedaemon and Thebes contended together *à outrance*, the loss of liberty to all Greece ensued . . . All the splendor of Greece was created by the active operation of many states and living energies; everything sound and permanent, on the contrary, in its taste and in its constitution, was produced by a wise and fortunate balance of its active powers. The success of its institutions was uniformly more noble and permanent in proportion as they were founded on humanity, i.e. reason and justice. Here the constitution of Greece gives us an ample field for reflection in what it contributed by its inventions and institutions, both to the happiness of its own citizens and to the welfare of mankind. (XIII,7)

### *VIII The Development of Rome*

It used to be an exercise of political theory to determine whether Rome owed her greatness more to fortune or to valor. Plutarch and many other writers, both Greek and Roman, have given their opinions on this point, and in modern times the question has been handled by almost every reflecting historian. Plutarch, after everything he has to allow to Roman valor, gives fortune the preponderance; but in this inquiry, as in his other writings, he shows himself the flowery, pleasant Greek, not the possessor of a comprehensive mind fully equal to his subject. Most of the Romans, on the contrary, ascribe everything to their valor; and the philosophers of later times have discovered a system of policy on which the Roman power was erected, from the first foundation stone to its greatest extent. History clearly shows that neither of these hypotheses is exclusively true, but that everything must be studied together for a solution of the problem. Valor, fortune and policy must have combined to make

possible what was actually accomplished, and we find these three deities allied in favor of Rome from the days of Romulus. Whether, in the ancient way, we call the whole group of living causes and effects nature or fortune, the valor of the Romans, not excluding even their barbarous severity, together with their policy and cunning, must be taken as part of this omnipotent fortune. Our view will always remain incomplete if we attach ourselves exclusively to either of these qualities, and, while we admire their firmness and skill in military affairs, overlook the accidents which so often and so luckily assisted them. The geese that saved the Capitol were no less the tutelary deities of Rome than the courage of Camillus, the temporizing of Fabius, or Jupiter Stator. In the physical world all the things that act together and upon each other, whether generating, supporting or destroying, must be considered as one whole; the same is true in the natural world of history.

It is a pleasant exercise to speculate about what Rome would have been under different circumstances: for instance, if it had been founded on a different spot; if at an early period it had been transported to Veii; if the Capitol had been taken by Brennus; if Italy had been attacked by Alexander, or if the city had been conquered by Hannibal . . . These inquiries would lead us to such an accurate chain of circumstances that at length we should learn to consider Rome, in the manner of an oriental sage, as a living creature, capable under such circumstances alone of rising from the banks of the Tiber, as if from the sea; gradually acquiring strength to contend with all nations, by sea and land, subdue and crush them; and lastly finding within itself the limits of its glory, and the origin of its corruption, as it actually did find them. Looked at in this way, everything arbitrary and irrational vanishes from history. In it, as in everything nature does, all, or nothing, is by chance; all, or nothing, is arbitrary. Every phenomenon in history is a natural production, and for man perhaps more worth studying than anything else, because in it so much depends on man, and he may find the most useful kernel, though enclosed perhaps in a bitter shell, even in what lies outside the

sphere of his own powers . . . This is the only philosophical method of looking at history, and it has been, even unconsciously, practised by all thinking minds.

Nothing has tended more to obstruct this impartial view than the attempt to consider even the bloody history of Rome as subservient to some secret limited design of Providence; for instance, that Rome was raised to such a height chiefly for the production of orators and poets; for extending the Roman law and Latin language to the limits of its empire, and smoothing the way for the introduction of Christianity. Everyone knows about the prodigious evils under which Rome, and the world around her, groaned, before such orators and poets could arise: how dear, for instance, Sicily bought Cicero's speech against Verres; and how much his orations against Catiline, and his philippics against Mark Antony, cost his country and himself. Thus a ship had to be lost, to save one pearl; and thousands had to lose their lives, merely that one flower might spring from their ashes, soon to be scattered to the winds. To purchase this Aeneid of a Virgil, and the tranquil muse and urbane epistles of a Horace, rivers of Roman blood had to flow, nations and kingdoms innumerable had to be destroyed. Were these fine fruits of a forced golden age worth the expense they cost? The case is the same with Roman law: for who does not know what vexations were suffered through it, and how many more humane institutions in very different countries it destroyed? Foreign nations were judged by manners they knew nothing of; crimes and punishments were introduced among them of which they had never heard. For that matter, has not the general progress of this jurisprudence, adapted to the constitution of Rome alone, after countless oppressions, so extinguished or vitiated the characters of all its conquered nations that, instead of their peculiar stamp, the Roman eagle at last appears everywhere, covering with feeble wings the disembowelled, eyeless carcasses of murdered provinces? . . .

We must also disapprove the opinion that the Romans came on the stage in the succession of ages, to form a more perfect link in the chain of cultivation than the Greeks, as in a picture designed



by man. In whatever the Greeks excelled, there the Romans never went beyond them; on the other hand, in what was properly their own, they learned nothing from the Greeks. They tried to profit by all nations of which they had any knowledge, even the Indians and troglodytes, but this they did as Romans; and it may be questioned whether to their advantage or to their detriment. Like other nations, the Greeks did not exist for the sake of the Romans, or frame for them their political institutions ages earlier. Athens and the Italian colonies made laws for themselves not for the Romans; and if Athens had never existed, Rome might have sent to Scythia for her twelve tables. In many respects, too, the Greek laws were more perfect than the Roman, and the defects of the latter spread themselves over a far more extensive region. If by chance the Romans were in any way more humane they were so in the Roman way, but it would have been altogether unnatural if the conquerors of so many civilized people had not learned at least a semblance of humanity, by which nations were often deceived.

Thus nothing remains but to consider the Roman nation and the Latin language as bridges placed by Providence for carrying some of the treasures of antiquity to us. Yet for this purpose the bridges were the worst possible, for we were robbed of most of these treasures by their very erection. The Romans were destroyers, and were in their turn destroyed, but the destroyers are no preservers of the world. They irritated all the nations, until at last they became their prey, and Providence performed no miracle in their behalf. Let us therefore think about this as like any other natural phenomenon, whose causes and effects we would like to investigate freely, without any preconceived hypothesis. The Romans were precisely what they were capable of becoming: everything perishable belonging to them perished, and what was capable of permanence remained . . . Everything that could blossom on earth has blossomed, each in its due season and in its proper sphere; it has withered away, and will blossom again when its time arrives. The work of Providence pursues its eternal course, according to great universal laws. (XIV,6)

## IX The Germans

We come now to the people who, by their size and strength of body, their enterprising, bold and persevering spirit in war, showed heroic aptitude for military service, and for following in a body their leaders, wherever they chose to conduct them, and for dividing the lands they subdued as their booty. With their extensive conquests, and the general diffusion of the German political constitution, they contributed more than any other race to the weal and woe of this quarter of the globe . . . There must have been some cause for this vast series of effects.

1. This cause lies not in the character of the nation alone; its physical and political situation, and a number of circumstances which combined in no other northern nation, cooperated in the course of their achievements. As the nearness of a rich and feeble state to one that is strong and needy, whose aid is indispensable to it, necessarily leads to the superiority and rule of the latter, the Romans themselves here put the sword into the hands of the Germans, who were established directly opposite to them in the centre of Europe, and whom they soon had to admit into their state or their armies.

2. The long resistance which several nations of our Germany had to make against the Romans necessarily strengthened their powers and their hatred of a hereditary enemy, who boasted more of triumphing over them than over any other people . . . The Marcoman and Suabian leagues, which several nations concluded against the Romans, the *heerbahn*, established in all the German tribes, even the most distant, by which every man was obliged to arm in defense of his country and to be a soldier, with other institutions, gave the whole nation both the name and constitution of Germans or Alemanns, that is, united warriors. This was the rude prototype of a system which centuries after, it was to extend to all the nations of Europe.

3. With such a permanent military constitution, the Germans

were necessarily deficient in many other virtues, which they not unwillingly sacrificed to their leading inclination or chief necessity, war. Agriculture they pursued with no great diligence, and in many tribes a yearly division of their lands prevented the pleasure individuals take in possessions of their own, and in improving the cultivation of their own fields.

When the German nations had become Christian, they fought for Christianity as they had for their kings and nobility, and this genuine loyalty of the sword was amply experienced by the Alemanns, Thuringians, Bavarians and Saxons, as well as by the poor [lesser tribes]. They stood as a living wall against the irruptions of later barbarians, and repelled the mad rage of Huns, Hungarians, Mongols and Turks. By them, too, the greater part of Europe was not only conquered, planted, and modelled, but covered and protected; otherwise it could never have produced what has appeared in it. Their rank among other nations, their military league, and their native character, have been the foundation of the civilization, freedom, and security of Europe; whether their political situation was not a joint cause of the slow progress of this civilization, history and impartial evidence will prove. (XVI,3)

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. . . We may rejoice that people of such a strong, handsome and noble form, chaste manners, generosity and probity as the Germans possessed the Roman world, instead, perhaps, of Huns or Bulgarians; but on this account to call them God's chosen people in Europe, to whom the world belongs by right of their innate nobility, and to whom other nations were destined to be subservient in consequence of this pre-eminence, would be to display the vulgar pride of a barbarian. The barbarian lords it over those whom he has vanquished; the civilized conqueror civilizes those whom he subdues.

No nation of Europe has raised itself to a civilized state: each has tried rather to retain its ancient barbarous manners as long as it possibly could. To this its raw, unprolific climate and the necessity of a rude military constitution greatly contributed. No

nation of Europe, for example, has letters of its own, or invented them for itself; from the Spanish to the runic of the north, all are derived from the alphabets of other nations. All the cultivation of the east, west, and north of Europe is a plant sprung from Roman, Greek and Arabic seed. It was a long time before this plant could thrive on the rugged soil and produce fruit of its own, at first quite sour; and for this a special instrument was necessary, a foreign religion, so that a spiritual conquest might complete what the Romans were unable to accomplish by their arms. Thus above all things we have to consider this new instrument of civilization, which had no less an aim than that of moulding all nations into one happy people, both in this world and in the next, and which operated nowhere more powerfully than in Europe. (XVI,6)

## ***X Medieval Civilization***

The knowledge the Christianity of the west had was expended, and turned to profit; its popular form had become a wretched verbal liturgy; its vile patrician rhetoric had been converted, in monasteries, churches, and communities, into a magic despotism over the mind, which the vulgar adored under whips and scourges, licking the dust in penitence. The arts and sciences ceased to exist: for what muse will dwell among the bones of martyrs, the din of bells and organs, the smoke of incense and prayers for deliverance from Purgatory? The hierarchy had launched its thunderbolts against all freedom of thought, and crippled with its yoke every noble spring of action. Reward in another world was preached to the suffering; the oppressor was secure of absolution in the hour of death, for a legacy; God's kingdom on earth was let to farm. (XIX,6)

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Praised forever be the sovereigns who founded, endowed and protected [the cities of Europe]; for with them were founded constitutions that first gave public spirit room to breathe; aristocratic-democratic bodies were formed, whose members watched



over each other, were often mutual enemies and opponents, and on this very account unavoidably promoted the common security, emulative industry and progressive exertion. Within the walls of a city, all that could awaken and give consistency to invention, diligence, civil liberty, economy, policy and order, according to the times, was condensed together in a narrow space; [the Hanseatic League] contributed more to give Europe the form of a commonwealth than all the crusades and Romish rites, for it rose superior to religious or national distinctions, and founded the connection of states on mutual advantage, imitative industry, honesty and order. Cities accomplished what was beyond the power of princes, priests and nobles: They formed of Europe one common cooperative body. (XX,5)

## *XI Conclusion*

How, then, did Europe come by its cultivation, and the rank it obtained by it above other countries? Time, place, necessity, the state of affairs, the stream of events, impelled it to this; but above all, its peculiar industry in the arts, the result of many common exertions, procured it this rank . . . The sovereignty of Europe is founded on activity and invention, on science and united emulative exertions.

The pressure of the Roman hierarchy was perhaps a necessary yoke, an indispensable bridle for the rude nations of the Middle Ages. Without it Europe would probably have been the prey of despots, a theatre of eternal discord, or even a Mongol wilderness . . . Action and reaction produced an effect neither party had intended: want, necessity and danger brought forward between the two a third state, which must be the life-blood of this great active body, or it will run into corruption. This is the state of science, or useful activity, of emulative industry in the arts, which necessarily, yet gradually, puts an end to the periods of chivalry and monasticism.

What the modern cultivation of Europe could be is evident from what has been said: only a cultivation of men as they were, and wanted to be; a cultivation, through the means of industry,

arts and sciences. Anyone who did not need, despised, or abused them, remained what he was; a universal, reciprocating formation of all ranks and nations, by means of education, laws and a political constitution, was not then to be thought of, and when will it be? Reason, however, and the effective joint activity of mankind, keep on their unwearied course, and it may even be thought a good sign when the best fruits do not ripen prematurely. (XX,6)

*Georg Wilhelm Friedrich  
Hegel*  
(1770-1831)

Hegel is quite possibly the greatest name in philosophy of history and is certainly the greatest systematizer it has ever had. His work in history grew out of his work in philosophy, and both at times are thoroughly difficult and obscure. To Hegel historical facts, like other facts, were meaningless until a logical framework had been established for them: historical thinking was a more advanced and complex kind of philosophical thinking.

Hegel's background came from the mingled Romantic and Enlightened currents of late-18th century Germany. German philosophy then was dominated by the disciples and opponents of Kant, all of whom thought about, and most of whom wrote about, historical problems in the metaphysical sense. From Herder on, they wondered why Nature's plan, which the great Newton had made so plain, did not seem to apply to human beings. Their question was less "What can we accurately estab-

lish about the past?" than "Into what present context does past experience fit?" According to Kantian principles, the answer was to be found not in studying records of the past to find out what had really happened, so much as in working out the principles of thought in general, since the rules that applied to other kinds of thought must apply to historical thought too. Thus the best student of history must be a philosopher; and Hegel is the greatest exponent of this view.

Abstract as Hegel's teaching is, it was more affected by the circumstances of his life than is the case with most philosophers. He was successively a theological student at Tübingen, a newspaper editor, a schoolmaster and a professor of philosophy. He began, like so many of his contemporaries, by being an Angry Young Man, and ended as a determined defender of Law and Order. He was almost femininely fascinated by force: in youth by the Jacobins, later by Napoleon, at the end of his life by the Prussian reactionaries. His thought drew from all the German and many of the foreign sources of his age: following Herder, and also perhaps from his Tübingen training, he believed that creeds and religious formulas express deep meaning, without being necessarily an exact statement of truth. From Herder also he derived the idea of a succession of national cultures, each built on the decay of the previous one, and each embodying some aspect of reality its predecessor had lacked. In his reading of Rousseau he had been struck by the idea of the state as embodied will. Fichte, Kant's greatest disciple, gave him the theory of the dialectic, including the triple movement of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. But the study of Hegel has to begin not with Romantics but with the rationalist Kant.

Kant's greatest work was in metaphysics, ethics and epistemology, but also he wrote a brief tract on universal history. It does not deal at all with historical facts, but suggests a framework within which the writing of history could take place. The essay begins with the premise that human actions are determined, like any other events, by laws not of God but of Nature. Yet history as a whole is rather disgusting, interwoven as it is with vanity, stupidity and viciousness. However, there must be a cause in



Nature (since Nature does nothing in vain) that has made it possible for man to misuse his talents in this way. Where the French *Philosophes* had held that man owed his advance to his good or rational qualities, Kant suggested it was rather the *bad* qualities that led him upward. Constantly getting into difficulties, humans had to develop adroitness and even genius to get out of them. The brains of mankind should, then, be used to develop a perfect constitution, which would employ as much force as was necessary to enable people to develop their bent for mischief freely, and thus make possible indefinite future advance. History is thus to be viewed as the realization of a hidden plan of Nature to bring about a perfect constitution. Any philosopher of history will aim at showing how this is to be done.

No one ever wrote a history in quite this way, but Hegel came as close as anyone. What he did was to apply the full treatment of post-Kantian logical analysis to Herder's national cultures. His starting point was not Kant's historical essay, but Kant's philosophy as a whole. Where, to the 18th century empiricists, nothing is in our minds except what is based on sense-experience, Kant's Idealism postulated that the forms, or categories, by which we arrange experience come from our minds, and from nowhere else. Thus all knowledge is in the form of ideas: if things apart from ideas exist, we have no way of knowing about them.

Hegel applied Idealism to every field of thought, but with some modifications, of which two stand out for historians. One is that Hegel's Idealism is based not on a world of things-in-themselves but on constant amalgamation of ideal and actual: the Idea, or God, which is not an abstraction from sense-experience but a supreme entity in its own right, strives constantly to express itself in the world. The other is that this process specifically applies to history. Where to Kant, in many ways a typical *Aufklärer*, history was a repulsive spectacle, to Hegel it was a purposive and exciting experience, although he was never able to control his excitement to the point of a completely rational demonstration of historical movement.

The basic problem Hegel posed himself in history was one of the oldest of all: how to account for a good and rational Creator

and a confused and jumbled human creation. This is basically a moral and metaphysical problem rather than a historical one, and Hegel's solution is on a philosophical level. He begins neither with the creation of the universe nor with a specific historical situation, but with God (the Idea). God is not a fixed deity who occasionally intervenes, but a purely abstract, Neo-Platonic Being which creates Nature. Nature, which in its concreteness contradicts the abstract Idea, is thus also an expression of it. By definition the Idea, when it objectifies its will in something concrete, is more fully itself than when it only wills itself: concretion is a necessary complement, development and fulfillment of abstraction. From the struggle of the Idea to express itself emerges first Nature; then Man, in whom the Idea can become conscious of itself; and then Spirit, which seems to be the aspect of God which is immanent in man, and is a constantly evolving resolution (synthesis) of the antithesis of Idea and Nature. As Hegel puts it, Abstract Being (the Idea in itself) leads through Nature (the Idea for itself) to Spirit (the Idea in and for itself). Every concept implicitly includes its opposite. The method by which this implicit opposition is made explicit, and then transcended in a unity which includes both the concept and its contradiction and finally becomes a statement which itself is subject to further analysis and synthesis, is the Hegelian dialectic.

"Analysis" and "synthesis" correspond in Hegel to "understanding" and "reason." Understanding (analysis) breaks up units into their parts: it points out that opposites are contradictory, and then stops. Reason (synthesis) sees beyond the analytical contradictions to the principle of the ultimate unity of opposites in any logical process of development. It also shows why what happens is in every case what *should* happen: the true reason for anything must include its moral justification. Hume and Kant, from Hegel's point of view, had been analytic: he wished to be synthetic, using his dialectical tool. The tool, of course, was not wholly new in his hands. The idea that any movement, when carried to its extreme, falls into its own opposite is Greek, and Aristotle had used it in his law of the degeneration of governments. What is new with Fichte and Hegel is the application of

this method to *all* thought, as well as the insistence that a contradiction is joined with a primary statement in a third movement that includes both. Somewhat newer is Hegel's insistence that in history logical explanation and moral justification are the same thing. Newest of all is his theory that since what develops in man is Spirit, history is not man's autobiography, but one aspect of that of Absolute Being, or God-in-man. God is not merely Being; He is movement or process, forever reaching out and forever returning to itself. Thus there is a sense in which God, attaining His full self through man's consciousness, is a universal process of evolution, although Hegel, who did not believe in biological evolution, never says so.

The same three-stage development that applies to Being applies to thought or mind. Subjective mind is perception: it is conscious of its own sensations, but nothing more. Objective mind is thought: not only conscious of itself, but expressing itself, first in the natural world, which contradicts it, then in the human world, which contradicts the natural world, and ultimately in institutions, which contradict the humans who compose them. The synthesis in which subjective and objective mind are reconciled is absolute mind. In the second stage (objective mind), mind becomes conscious of law; in the third, it realizes that these laws are an expression of itself, and obeys them freely. "Man is only man," says Hegel, "when he is thinking." Only in thought can the dualism between the self and the world be overcome. As thought is what is ideal in the world, so the world is what is concrete in the Idea. Only by being actualized, i.e. expressed in concrete objects it has itself willed, does thought really become itself. But the more concrete it becomes, the more fully does it become Spirit, in which the antithesis between abstract and concrete is transcended. The movement is contrapuntal: theme, variations and final re-statement.

In the same way Spirit, although it arises partly from Nature, is at war with it. Where natural growth is cyclical and goes nowhere, human growth evolves constantly and agonizingly toward self-consciousness, i.e. awareness that it is itself Spirit. History is defined as the growth of this awakening consciousness: it is the

process of Spirit becoming aware of itself progressively as men painfully become conscious that what Spirit wills is what they themselves are. The argument implies automatic tension between opposites, constantly in process of reconciliation and constantly thrown off balance in order that a new state of tension may be set up.

Hegel took history more seriously than any other major philosopher has ever done, not only in the sense that he was one of the very few to deal at length with what a historian calls historical facts, but in the deeper sense that process, the succession of events, is the core of all his teaching. He dealt historically with almost every subject he worked on, and thought of his whole philosophical work as preparation for his historical lectures, which became the *Philosophy of History*. He did not begin these until his fifties, and thus history, the last field he worked in, is in a sense the summit of all his teaching, because it is its concretion, and therefore its necessary culmination.

Hegelian history is thus a further stage of philosophy. According to an empiricist, sequences of historical events form, so to speak, their own laws, and a big enough collection of properly verified facts of the same kind will in itself show the historian how it ought to be organized: the trends will be apparent in the material. But if, as Kant had shown, sense-impressions are organized by our own mental categories, then the evidence of history must be marshalled in the same way: the sequence of events not only must be temporal but logical. For instance, faced with the notorious decline from brilliant classical light to utter medieval darkness, earlier historians had wrung their hands or insisted that the decline was a lapse from rationality. Hegel had to show precisely how the "Dark Ages" came about, what elements led to them, and how these elements were resolved in the next age. He also tried to show that the "Dark Ages" were in some ways an advance on Roman civilization, a point that would have unnerved even Kant.

His project of making a confused (because human) series of events into a logical (because philosophical) one involved a particular kind of use of historical data. His method came not



from historical training but from philosophical postulates: while the facts themselves were not exactly unimportant they were to be looked through, not at. Once more, as with the Greeks, history consisted of "participation in reason." Hegel worked out the laws of history before he began his close study of historical facts; these facts are to be thought of as the outward and visible sign of the inward working of Spirit, nothing more. The dialectic in history shows itself as conflict between Spirit and its own historical phases. While each particular phase dies, only to be reborn at a higher level, Spirit grows more and more universal as it includes wider and wider classes of facts in which to concretize itself.

Therefore, history is the drama of the constant reaching out into the world and returning to itself of Absolute Idea. The stage is the human world, but the point of the play is the slow and often brutal awakening of man to participation in vast, cosmic forces he may dimly understand but is powerless to contravene—even though they exist partly in himself. Such titanic power takes little account of most individuals, who have only the choice of cooperating blindly, or being ignored, or being trampled on. It is the large masses, the nations, that are Hegel's ordinary units, because in them there seems to reside a special kind of national reality, a *Volksgeist* or General Will, which takes its meaning less from Herder than from Rousseau and partakes more fully of Spirit than any particular human will can possibly do.

No word in Hegel's historical vocabulary has been more misunderstood than "nation," which most emphatically does not mean any *de facto* government. What he has in mind are organic entities that are as much cultural as political; but unfortunately, and illogically, he spends most of the *Philosophy of History* discussing political history. A nation is the embodiment of Spirit: it is the best kind of unit because—as in Herder—it is large enough to have a collective will which can be expressed as law, and small enough to have a definite, identifiable Spirit of its own. Nations grow, flourish and die, but every important one, like a Phoenix, not only contains but *is* a more fully developed phase of Spirit than its predecessor. This is what makes these more significant peoples, or sometimes events, "world-historical."

A people is world-historical insofar as it furthers the development of Spirit. The same is true of events within its history, and even of individuals. Here Hegel leaves Bodin, Vico and Herder, none of whom gave much space to individuals. To Hegel, history is developing consciousness of Spirit; this is basically a quality of mind and will. Certain individuals have a disproportionate part to play in it, because they not only seem to realize what Spirit expects of them but have the intensity and drive to do something about it: Alexander, Caesar, Napoleon. None of these men are philosophers, and, therefore, they do not really understand what they are doing. But in Kant's sense (though in Hegel's phrase) the "cunning of Reason" (which here seems to mean Idea developing toward Spirit) is using them to fulfill its aims. It is their task to bring Spirit to fruition; when they have done so they are cast off and broken, as the Idea rolls on its omnipotent way. For a brief space their passion and concentration on a national object have made them into the embodiment of a people, as the people is the temporary abode of Spirit.

Since even world-historical individuals cannot understand the progress of World-Spirit in its ascending and pugnacious course through national Spirit, it is obvious that only philosophers can be true historians. Non-philosophical history, with which historians occupy themselves, is nothing more than the bare bones of which real or philosophical history is made. The philosopher, looking at this skeleton, can discover its final cause, motive and ultimate meaning, much as an anthropologist, uncovering a thigh-bone in a pit, can reconstruct an entire animal from it. Because of his training in the inner logic which drives *all* events, the philosopher can make meaningful the particular series of events called "history."

Above all, he will be able to point out that what to individuals and even peoples is senseless tragedy, brutality and confusion is, from the point of view of the whole, an advance—as Kant had suggested. The significant parts of history reflect Spirit, and develop; and the fastest development occurs where tension is strongest. The rest is cast off and perishes, as a growing insect sheds its old skin. Nothing that is good is ever lost, and it seems

to follow that nothing that has been lost is of any value. Otherwise Spirit, like Kant's Nature, would be working in vain, which is axiomatically impossible. Thus the philosophical historian can show conclusively what Hegel's predecessors had been trying to prove for the last century: that the Idea of Progress is a built-in law of the universe, in spite of the errors and misery of the individual humans whose actions makes up history.

The meaning of "progress"—an *Aufklärung*-loaded, unphilosophical word Hegel almost never uses, but which describes the inscrutable, zigzag onrush of Spirit—is the most vital point in his philosophy of history. Man participates in this advance solely by becoming conscious of his true self. The essence of that true self is mind, and the essence of mind is Freedom. History in the fullest sense is the story of the consciousness of its development, which takes two forms: subjective Freedom is the consciousness in the individual that Freedom exists. Objective or substantial Freedom is the Freedom that actually does exist. The combination (synthesis) of the two is the individual's realization that Freedom depends on his participation.

It is important, though, to distinguish between ordinary freedom and Hegel's Freedom. Mere freedom is license or caprice: doing what you like. But since Hegel—like St. Augustine, whose philosophy of history his strongly resembles—believed that man was part Nature and part Spirit, and since bondage to Nature is no Freedom at all, it is plain that only certain kinds of "free" acts promote Freedom. Everything in Nature gravitates toward something outside itself. Spirit alone is self-contained, as are world-historical states and individuals, because they participate in it; they are autonomous, their own law; they do not need to be told what has to be done. Acting freely, then, is acting in such a way that you promote the awakening self-consciousness of Spirit in the nation you belong to. This furthers what St. Augustine would have called the Divine Plan, and what Hegel calls Spirit's consciousness of itself. There is one change: in Hegel the State has become the City of God. Thus Freedom means acting in accordance with historical necessity, but at the same time accepting the necessity freely. It can be freely accepted not only because of your recognition that the members of your society are

affected by what you do, but because their will, in an almost mystical sense, is your own. The drive of this group is expressed as law: the objectified will of the community as a whole. The truly free man freely accepts just law. The most just kind of law is that which embodies most fully the total will of a world-historical people.

But Freedom under law is not one and the same for all men. Each period of history has its own stage of Freedom, which is embodied in one world-historical people at a time, and that is the best for that period. The greatest individuals are those who do the most to promote it. Where morality may be absolute (this is not wholly clear), the development of Spirit, which works within a different and more relative context, is beyond and even above it. An action is good in the highest sense if it promotes the world-historicity of a people. Whatever does not do this is "mere caprice." Whatever does do it is good no matter who it hurts: just as world-historical peoples have no responsibilities to the relatively barbarous nations which are their contemporaries, so world-historical individuals can ride roughshod over ordinary moral prejudices. All other Freedom, whether of the individual or of society, must—and will—be subordinated to that of Spirit to develop itself. This is another way of saying that the end justifies the means.

True liberty, then, consists in the enthusiastic acceptance of tension—tension between your own will and that of your society, and between your society and developing Spirit, of which it is an integral part. The tension is overcome in your awakening consciousness that every important thing that happens not only must happen, but *should*: time-sequence is one aspect of logical consequence or historical necessity, and historical necessity must include moral justification. What is real, i.e. the inner basis of history, is rational, and what is rational is just. And in this realization—and there alone—is Freedom.

Hegel's philosophy of history could be described as "Idealism plus Romantic nationalism." Romantics tended to dislike too-precise definitions, and Hegel's definition of terms is less than precise, particularly such words as Idea, Spirit, Reason. The relation between morality and the evolution of Spirit is by no means



clear, nor is the extent to which the thesis-antithesis-synthesis triad, which is the basis of Hegel's logic, is supposed to apply in history: it does not appear once in the *Philosophy of History*.

On the other hand, a comparison with Vico or Herder will make it clear that Hegel represents a change in several directions. By making history a branch of post-Kantian philosophy he has given it a particular kind of conceptual meaning, and at the same time shed a number of earlier problems, such as the relation of history to Scripture, cycles, the crude 18th-century Idea of Progress, and the End of Time. One problem he has *not* shed is that of ultimate meaning, which he states within the old context of theodicy, although with an odd Idealist-Evolutionist use of terms. This is done by abrogating one distinction which had bothered philosophers of history from St. Augustine on (that between a higher world and the world of time and space) and insisting on another (that between natural process and historical development). The nature of historical thinking is worked out for the first time since Vico, and non-logical terms like "Spirit" and "passion" are woven into the whole theoretical explanation. Moreover, in Hegel the individual plays a vital part in a theory of history as a whole for the first time in several centuries.

But these wildly diverse elements are never wholly integrated. The usual comment about Hegel's theory of history is that it is too intellectualist; the real problem is that it is not intellectualist enough. Hegel, at least as a historian, is a Romantic enthusiast.

## READINGS<sup>1</sup>

### *I Ultimate Purpose in History*

The only thought which philosophy brings with it to the contemplation of history is the simple conception of

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<sup>1</sup> The readings are adapted, with the language and punctuation slightly modernized, from the standard Sibree translation of Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, which is most easily available in the edition published by Dover Publications, Inc. (New York, 1956).

Reason; that Reason is the sovereign of the world; that the history of the world, therefore, presents us with a rational process. This conviction and intuition is a hypothesis in the domain of history as such. Reason . . . is substance, as well as infinite power; its own infinite material underlying all the natural and spiritual life which it originates, as also the infinite form—that which sets this material in motion. On one hand, Reason is the substance of the universe, i.e. that by which and in which all reality has its being and subsistence. On the other hand, it is the infinite energy of the universe; since Reason is not so powerless as to be incapable of producing anything but a mere ideal, a mere intention—having its place outside reality, nobody knows where; something separate and abstract, in the heads of certain human beings. It is the infinite complex of things, their entire essence and truth. It is its own material which it commits to its own active energy to work up; not needing, as finite action does, the conditions of an external material of given means from which it may obtain its support, and the objects of its activity. It supplies its own nourishment, and is the object of its own operations. While it is exclusively its own basis of existence, and absolute final aim, it is also the energizing power realizing this aim; developing it not only in the phenomena of the natural, but also of the spiritual universe—the history of the world. That this “Idea” or “Reason” is the true, the eternal, the absolutely powerful essence; that it reveals itself in the world, and that in that world nothing else is revealed but this and its honor and glory—is the thesis which, as we have said, has been proved in philosophy, and is here regarded as demonstrated. (pages 9-10)

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The world is not abandoned to chance and external contingent causes, but a Providence controls it . . . for Divine Providence is wisdom, endowed with infinite power, which realizes its aim, i.e. the absolute rational design of the world. Reason is thought conditioning itself with perfect Freedom. But a difference—rather, a contradiction—will manifest itself between this belief and our principle, just as was the case in reference to the demand made

by Socrates in the case of Anaxagoras' dictum. For that belief is similarly indefinite; it is what is called a belief in a general Providence, and is not followed out into definite application, or displayed in its bearing on the grand total—the entire course of human history. But to *explain* history is to depict the passions of mankind, the genius, the active powers, that play their part on the great stage; and the providentially determined process which these exhibit constitutes what is generally called the “plan” of Providence . . .

In the history of the world the individuals we have to do with are peoples; totalities that are states. We cannot, therefore, be satisfied with what we may call this “peddling” view of Providence, to which the belief alluded to limits itself. Equally unsatisfactory is the merely abstract, undefined belief in a Providence, when that belief is not brought to bear upon the details of the process which it conducts. On the contrary, our earnest endeavor must be directed to the recognition of the ways of Providence, the means it uses, and the historical phenomena in which it manifests itself; and we must show their connection with the general principle above mentioned. (12-14)



It was for a while the fashion to profess admiration for the wisdom of God, as displayed in animals, plants, and isolated occurrences. But, if it be allowed that Providence shows itself in such objects and forms of existence, why not also in universal history? This is deemed too great a matter to be thus regarded. But divine Wisdom, i.e. Reason, is one and the same in the great, as in the little; and we must not imagine God to be too weak to exercise his wisdom on the grand scale. Our intellectual striving aims at realizing the conviction that what was intended by eternal wisdom is actually accomplished in the domain of existing, active Spirit, as well as in that of mere Nature. Our mode of treating the subject is, in this aspect, a Theodicy—a justification of the ways of God . . . (15)



What is the ultimate design of the world? . . . It must be observed, at the outset, that universal history belongs to the realm of Spirit. The term "world" includes both physical and psychic Nature. Physical Nature also plays its part in the world's history, and attention will have to be paid to the fundamental natural relations thus involved. But Spirit, and the course of its development, is our substantial object. Our task does not require us to contemplate Nature as a rational system in itself—though in its own proper domain it proves itself such—but simply in its relation to Spirit . . . (16)

## *II The Idea of Freedom*

The nature of Spirit may be understood by a glance at its direct opposite—matter. As the essence of matter is gravity, so the essence of Spirit is Freedom. All will readily assent to the doctrine that Spirit, among other properties, is also endowed with Freedom; but philosophy teaches that all the qualities of Spirit exist only through Freedom: that all are but means for attaining Freedom; that all seek and produce this and this alone. It is a result of speculative philosophy that Freedom is the sole truth of Spirit. Matter possesses gravity in virtue of its tendency toward a central point. It is essentially composite; consisting of parts that exclude each other. It seeks its unity, and therefore exhibits itself as self-destructive, as verging toward its opposite. If it could attain this, it would be matter no longer; it would have perished. It strives after the realization of its Idea; for in unity it exists ideally. Spirit, on the contrary, may be defined as that which has its center in itself. It has not a unity outside itself, but has already found it; it exists in and with itself. Matter has its essence outside itself; Spirit is self-contained existence. Now this is Freedom, exactly. For if I am dependent, my being is referred to something else which I am not; I cannot exist independently of something external. I am free, on the contrary, when my existence depends upon myself. This self-contained existence of Spirit is none other than self-consciousness—consciousness of one's own being . . .



Universal history is the exhibition of Spirit in the process of working out the knowledge of that which it is potentially. And as the germ bears in itself the whole nature of the tree, and the taste and form of its fruits, so do the first traces of Spirit virtually contain the whole of that history. The Orientals have not attained the knowledge that Spirit—man *as such*—is free; and because they do not know this, they are not free. They only know that *one* is free. But on this very account, the freedom of that one is only caprice; ferocity—brutal recklessness of passion, or a mildness and tameness of the desires, which is itself only an accident of Nature—mere caprice likes the former. That one is therefore only a despot, not a free man. The consciousness of Freedom first arose among the Greeks, and therefore they were free; but they, and the Romans likewise, knew only that some are free—not man as such. Even Plato and Aristotle did not know this. The Greeks, therefore, had slaves; and their whole life, and the maintenance of their splendid liberty, was implicated with the institution of slavery . . .

The German nations, under the influence of Christianity, were the first to attain the consciousness that man, as man, is free; that it is the Freedom of Spirit which constitutes its essence. This consciousness arose first in religion, the inmost region of Spirit; but to introduce the principle into the various relationships of the actual world involves a more extensive problem than its simple implantation; a problem whose solution and application require a severe and lengthened process of culture. In proof of this, we may note that slavery did not cease immediately on the reception of Christianity. Still less did liberty predominate in states; or governments and constitutions adopt a rational organization, or recognize freedom as their basis. That application of the principle to political relations, the thorough moulding and interpenetration of the constitution of society by it, is a process identical with history itself. I have already directed attention to the distinction here involved, between a principle as such, and its application, i.e., its introduction and carrying out in the actual phenomena of Spirit and life. This is a point of fundamental importance in our science, and one which must be constantly respected as essential. And in the same way as this distinction has attracted attention in

view of the Christian principle of self-consciousness—Freedom—it also shows itself as an essential one, in view of the principle of Freedom generally. The history of the world is none other than the progress of the consciousness of Freedom; a progress whose development according to the necessity of its nature, it is our business to investigate.

The general statement given above, of the various grades in the consciousness of Freedom—and which we applied in the first instance to the fact that the Eastern nations knew only that *one* is free; the Greek and Roman world only that *some* are free; while we know that all men absolutely (man as *man*) are free—supplies us with the natural division of Universal history, and suggests the mode of its discussion.

The destiny of the spiritual world, and—since this is the substantial world, while the physical remains subordinate to it, or, in the language of speculation, has no truth as against the spiritual—the final cause of the world at large, we allege to be the consciousness of its own Freedom on the part of Spirit, and *ipso facto*, the reality of that Freedom . . . In the process before us, the essential nature of Freedom—which involves in it absolute necessity—is to be displayed as coming to a consciousness of itself (for it is in its very nature, self-consciousness) and thereby realizing its existence. Itself is its own object of attainment, and the sole aim of Spirit. This result it is, at which the process of the world's history has been continually aiming; and to which the sacrifices that have ever and anon been laid on the vast altar of the earth, through the long lapse of ages, have been offered. This is the only aim that sees itself realized and fulfilled; the only sole efficient principle that pervades them. This final aim is God's purpose with the world; but God is the absolutely perfect being, and can, therefore, will nothing other than himself—His own will. The nature of His will,—that is, His nature itself—is what we here call the Idea of Freedom . . . (17-20)

### III *The Work of the Passions*

Although Freedom is, primarily, an undeveloped idea, the means it uses are external and phenomenal, presenting

themselves in history to our sensuous vision. The first glance at history convinces us that the actions of men proceed from their needs, their passions, their characters and talents; and impresses us with the belief that such needs, passions and interests are the sole springs of action—the efficient agents in this scene of activity. Among these may, perhaps, be found aims of a liberal or universal kind—benevolence, it may be, or noble patriotism; but such virtues and general views are but insignificant as compared with the world and its doings. We may perhaps see the Ideal of Reason actualized in those who adopt such aims, and within the sphere of their influence; but they bear only a trifling proportion to the mass of the human race; and the extent of that influence is limited accordingly. Passions, private aims, and the satisfaction of selfish desires, are on the other hand most effective springs of action. Their power lies in the fact that they respect none of the limitations which justice and morality would impose on them and that these natural impulses have a more direct influence over man than the artificial and tedious discipline that tends to order and self-restraint, law and morality. When we look at this display of passions, and the consequences of their violence; the unreason which is associated not only with them, but even (rather we might say *especially*) with *good* designs and righteous aims; when we see the evil, vice and ruin that have befallen the most flourishing kingdoms which the mind of man ever created; we can scarcely avoid being filled with sorrow at this universal taint of corruption . . .

But even regarding history as the slaughter-bench at which the happiness of peoples, the wisdom of states, and the virtue of individuals have been victimized—the question involuntarily arises: to what principle, to what final aim these enormous sacrifices have been offered. From this point the investigation usually proceeds to that which we have made the general beginning of our inquiry. Starting from this, we pointed out those phenomena which made up a picture so suggestive of gloomy emotions and thoughtful reflections—as the very field which we, for our part, regard as exhibiting only the means for realizing what we assert

to be the essential destiny—the absolute aim, or—which comes to the same thing—the true result of the world's history . . .

The first remark we have to make is that what we call principle, aim, destiny, or the nature and idea of Spirit, is something merely general and abstract. Principle—plan of existence—law—is a hidden, undeveloped essence, which as such—however true in itself—is not completely real. Aims, principles, etc., have a place in our thoughts, in our subjective design only; but not yet in the sphere of reality. That which exists for itself only is a possibility, a potentiality; but has not yet emerged into existence. A second element must be introduced in order to produce actuality—i.e. actuation, realization; and whose motive power is the will—the activity of man in the widest sense. It is only by this activity that that Idea, as well as abstract characteristics generally, are realized, actualized; for of themselves they are powerless. The motive power that puts them in operation, and gives them determinate existence, is the need, instinct, inclination, and passion of man . . .

If men are to interest themselves for anything, they must (so to speak) have part of their existence involved in it; find their individuality gratified by its attainment . . . We assert then that nothing has been accomplished without interest on the part of the actors; and, if interest is called passion . . . we may affirm absolutely that nothing great in the world has been accomplished without passion. Two elements, therefore, enter into the object of our investigation; the first the Idea, the second the complex of human passions; the one the warp, the other the woof of the vast tapestry of universal history. The concrete mean and union of the two is liberty, under the conditions of morality in a state . . .

A state is then well-constituted and internally powerful when the private interest of its citizens is one with the common interest of the state; when the one finds its gratification and realization in the other—a proposition in itself very important. But in a state many institutions must be adopted, much political machinery invented, accompanied by appropriate political arrangements—



necessitating long struggles of the understanding before what is really appropriate can be discovered—involving, moreover, contentions with private interest and passions, and a tedious discipline of these latter, in order to bring about the desired harmony. The epoch when a state attains this harmonious condition, marks the period of its bloom, its virtue, its vigor, and its prosperity. But the history of mankind does not begin with a *conscious* aim of any kind, as it is the case with the particular circles into which men form themselves of set purpose. The mere social instinct implies a conscious purpose of security for life and property; and when society has been constituted, this purpose becomes more comprehensive. The history of the world begins with its general aim—the realization of the Idea of Spirit—only in an *implicit* form, that is, as Nature; a hidden, most profoundly hidden, unconscious instinct; and the whole process of history (as already observed) is directed to rendering this unconscious impulse a conscious one. Thus appearing in the form of merely natural existence, natural will—that which has been called the subjective side—physical craving, instinct, passion, private interest, as also opinion and subjective conception—spontaneously present themselves at the very beginning. This vast congeries of volitions, interests and activities constitute the instruments and means of the world-Spirit for attaining its object; bringing it to consciousness, and realizing it. And this aim is none other than finding itself—coming to itself—and contemplating itself in concrete actuality. But that those manifestations of vitality on the part of individuals and peoples, in which they seek and satisfy their own purposes, are, at the same time, the means and instruments of a higher and broader purpose of which they know nothing—which they realize unconsciously—might be a matter of question . . .

In the process of the world's history itself—as still incomplete—the abstract final aim of history is not yet made the distinct object of desire and interest. While these limited sentiments are still unconscious of the purpose they are fulfilling, the universal principle is implicit in them, and is realizing itself through them.  
(20-26)

#### ***IV The Relation Between Individuals and Spirit***

The history of the world is not the theatre of happiness. Periods of happiness are blank pages in it, for they are periods of harmony—periods when the antithesis is in abeyance. Reflection on self—the Freedom above described—is abstractly defined as the formal element of the activity of the absolute Idea. The realizing activity of which we have spoken is the middle term of the syllogism, one of whose extremes is the universal essence, the Idea, which reposes in the penetralia of Spirit; and the other, the complex of external things—objective matter. That activity is the medium by which the universal latent principle is translated into the domain of objectivity.

I will try to make what has been said more vivid and clear by examples. The building of a house is, in the first instance, a subjective aim and design. On the other hand we have, as means, the several substances required for the work—iron, wood, stones. The elements are made use of in working up this material: fire to melt the iron, wind to blow the fire, water to set wheels in motion, in order to cut the wood, etc. The result is that the wind, which has helped to build the house, is shut out by the house; so also are the violence of rains and floods, and the destructive powers of fire, so far as the house is made fireproof. The stones and beams obey the law of gravity—press downward—and so high walls are carried up. Thus the elements are made use of in accordance with their nature, and yet to co-operate for a product by which their operation is limited. Thus the passions of men are gratified; they develop themselves and their aims in accordance with their natural tendencies, and build up the edifice of human society; thus fortifying a position for Right and Order *against themselves*.

The connection of events above indicated involves also the fact that in history an additional result is commonly produced by human actions beyond that which they aim at and obtain—that which they immediately recognize and desire. They gratify

their own interest; but something further is thereby accomplished, latent in the actions in question, though not present to their consciousness, and not included in their design. (26-27)

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In this sphere [of history] are presented those momentous collisions between existing, acknowledged duties, laws, and rights, and those contingencies which are adverse to this fixed system, which assail and even destroy its foundations and existence; whose tenor may nevertheless seem good—on the large scale advantageous—yes, even indispensable and necessary. These contingencies realize themselves in history. They involve a general principle of a different order from that on which depends the permanence of a people or a state. This principle is an essential phase in the development of the creating Idea, of truth striving and urging towards consciousness of itself. Historical men—world-historical individuals—are those in whose aims such a general principle lies.

Caesar, in danger of losing a position, not perhaps at that time of superiority, yet at least of equality with the others who were at the head of the state, and of succumbing to those who were just on the point of becoming his enemies—belongs essentially to this category. These enemies—who were at the same time pursuing *their* personal aims—had the form of the constitution, and the power conferred by an appearance of justice, on their side. Caesar was contending for the maintenance of his position, honor, and safety; and, since the power of his opponents included the sovereignty over the provinces of the Roman Empire, his victory secured for him the conquest of that entire empire; and he thus became—though leaving the form of the constitution—the autocrat of the state. That which secured for him the execution of a design, which in the first instance was of negative import—the autocracy of Rome—was, however, at the same time an independently necessary feature in the history of Rome and of the world. It was not, then, his private gain merely, but an unconscious impulse that occasioned the accomplishment of that for which the time was ripe. Such are all great historical men—whose

own particular aims involve those large issues which are the will of world-Spirit. They may be called heroes, inasmuch as they have derived their purposes and their vocation not from the calm, regular course of things, sanctioned by the existing order, but from a concealed fount—one which has not attained to phenomenal, present existence—from that inner Spirit, still hidden beneath the surface, which, impinging on the outer world as on a shell, bursts it in pieces, because it is another kernel than that which belonged to the shell in question. They are men, therefore, who appear to draw the impulse of their life from themselves, and whose deeds have produced a condition of things and a complex of historical relations which appear to be only *their* interest, and *their* work.

Such individuals had no consciousness of the general Idea they were unfolding, while prosecuting those aims of theirs; on the contrary, they were practical, political men. But at the same time they were thinking men, who had an insight into the requirements of the time—what was ripe for development. This was the very Truth for their age, for their world; the species next in order, so to speak, and which was already formed in the womb of time. It was theirs to know this nascent principle; the necessary, directly sequent step in progress which their world was to take; to make this their aim, and to expend their energy in promoting it. World-historical men—the Heroes of an epoch—must, therefore, be recognized as its clear-sighted ones; *their* deeds, *their* words are the best of that time. Great men have formed purposes to satisfy themselves, not others. Whatever prudent designs and counsels they might have learned from others would be the more limited and inconsistent features in their career; for it was they who best understood affairs; from whom others learned, and approved, or at least acquiesced in—their policy. For that Spirit which had taken this fresh step in history is the inmost soul of all individuals; but in a state of unconsciousness which the great men in question aroused. Their fellows, therefore, follow these soul-leaders; for they feel the irresistible power of their own inner Spirit thus embodied. If we go on to cast a look at the fate of these world-historical persons, whose vocation it was to be the agents of the



world-Spirit, we shall find it to have been no happy one. They attained no calm enjoyment; their whole life was labor and trouble; their whole nature was nothing else but their master-passion. When their object is attained they fall off like empty hulls from the kernel. They die early, like Alexander; they are murdered, like Caesar; transported to St. Helena, like Napoleon. This fearful consolation—that historical men have not enjoyed what is called happiness, and of which only private life (and this may be passed under very various external circumstances) is capable—this consolation those may draw from history, who stand in need of it; and it is craved by Envy—vexed at what is great and transcendent—striving, therefore, to depreciate it, and to find some flaw in it. Thus in modern times it has been demonstrated *ad nauseam* that princes are generally unhappy on their thrones; in consideration of this the possession of a throne is tolerated, and men acquiesce in the fact that not themselves but the personages in question are its occupants. The free man, we may observe, is not envious, but gladly recognizes what is great and exalted, and rejoices that it exists.

It is in the light of those common elements which constitute the interest and therefore the passions of individuals, that these historical men are to be regarded. They are *great* men, because they willed and accomplished something great; not a mere fancy, a mere intention, but that which met the case and fell in with the needs of the age . . .

A world-historical individual is not so unwise as to indulge a variety of wishes to divide his regards. He is devoted to the one aim, regardless of all else. It is even possible that such men may treat other great, even sacred interests, inconsiderately; conduct which is indeed obnoxious to moral reprehension. But so mighty a form must trample down many an innocent flower—crush to pieces many an object in its path. (29-32)

## V    *The Divine Plan*

The special interest of passion is thus inseparable from the active development of a general principle: for it is from

the special and determinate and from its negation that the Universal results. Particularity contends with its like, and some loss is involved in the issue. It is not the general idea that is implicated in opposition and combat, and that is exposed to danger. It remains in the background, untouched and uninjured. This may be called the *cunning of reason*—that it sets the passions to work for itself, while that which develops its existence through such impulsion pays the penalty, and suffers loss. For it is *phenomenal* being that is so treated, and of this, part is of no value, part is positive and real. The particular is for the most part of too trifling value as compared with the general: individuals are sacrificed and abandoned. The Idea pays the penalty of determinate existence and of corruptibility, not from itself, but from the passions of individuals.

But though we might tolerate the idea that individuals, their desires and the gratification of them, are thus sacrificed, and their happiness given up to the empire of chance, to which it belongs; and that as a general rule, individuals come under the category of means to an ulterior end—there is one aspect of human individuality which we should hesitate to regard in that subordinate light, even in relation to the highest; since it is absolutely no subordinate element, but exists in those individuals as inherently eternal and divine. I mean morality, ethics, religion . . .

Man is an object of existence in himself only in virtue of the divine that is in him—that which was designated at the outset as Reason; which, in view of its activity and power of self-determination, was called Freedom. And we affirm—without entering at present on the proof of the assertion—that religion, morality, etc., have their foundation and source in that principle, and so are essentially elevated above all alien necessity and chance. And here we must remark that individuals, to the extent of their Freedom, are responsible for the depravation and enfeeblement of morals and religion. This is the seal of the absolute and sublime destiny of man—that he knows what is good and what is evil; that his destiny *is* his very ability to will either good or evil—in one word, that he is the subject of moral imputation, imputation not only of evil, but of good; and not only concerning

this or that particular matter, and all that happens *ab extra*, but also the good and evil attaching to his individual Freedom. The brute alone is simply innocent. (32-34)

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The insight, then, to which—in contradistinction from those ideals—philosophy is to lead us, is that the real world is as it ought to be—that the truly good—the universal divine reason—is not a mere abstraction, but a vital principle capable of realizing itself. This Good, this Reason, in its most concrete form, is God. God governs the world; the actual working of his government—the carrying out of his plan—is the history of the world. This plan philosophy strives to comprehend; for only that which has been developed as the result of it, possesses bona fide reality. That which does not accord with it is negative, worthless existence. Before the pure light of this divine Idea—which is no mere Ideal—the phantom of a world whose events are an incoherent concourse of fortuitous circumstances, utterly vanishes. Philosophy wishes to discover the substantial purport, the real side of the divine idea, and to justify the so much despised reality of things; for Reason is the comprehension of the divine work. But as to what concerns the perversion, corruption, and ruin of religious, ethical and moral purposes, and states of society generally, it must be affirmed that in their essence these are infinite and eternal; but that the forms they assume may be of a limited order, and consequently belong to the domain of mere nature, and be subject to the sway of chance. They are therefore perishable, and exposed to decay and corruption. (36-37)

## ***VI    The State as Objectification of the Idea***

What is the material in which the Ideal of Reason is wrought out? The primary answer would be—personality itself—human desires—subjectivity generally. In human knowledge and volition, as its material element, Reason attains positive existence . . . As a subjective will, occupied with limited passions, it is dependent, and can gratify its desires only within the limits of

this dependence. But the subjective will has also a substantial life—a reality—in which it moves in the region of essential being, and has the essential itself as the object of its existence. This essential being is the union of the subjective with the rational will: it is the moral whole, the state, which is that form of reality in which the individual has and enjoys his Freedom; but on the condition of his recognizing, believing in, and willing that which is common to the whole. And this must not be understood as if the subjective will of the social unit attained its gratification and enjoyment through that common will; as if this were a means provided for its benefit; as if the individual, in his relations to other individuals, thus limited his Freedom, in order that this universal limitation—the mutual constraint of all—might secure a small space of liberty for each. Rather, we affirm, are law, morality, government, and they alone, the positive reality and completion of Freedom. Freedom of a low and limited order is mere caprice, which finds its exercise in the sphere of particular and limited desires.

Subjective volition—passion—is that which sets men in activity, that which effects “practical” realization. The Idea is the inner spring of action; the state is the actually existing, realized moral life. For it is the unity of the universal, essential will with that of the individual; and this is “morality” . . . The laws of morality are not accidental, but are the essentially rational. It is the very object of the state that what is essential in the practical activity of men, and in their dispositions, should be duly recognized; that it should have a manifest existence, and maintain its position. It is the absolute interest of Reason that this moral whole should exist; and herein lies the justification and merit of heroes who have founded states—however rude these may have been. In the history of the world, only those peoples can come under our notice which form a state. For it must be understood that this latter is the realization of Freedom, i.e. of the absolute final aim, and that it exists for its own sake. It must further be understood that all the worth which the human being possesses—all spiritual reality, he possesses only through the state. For his spiritual reality consists in this, that his own essence—Reason—is objectively



present to him, that it possesses objective immediate existence for him. Thus only is he fully conscious; thus only is he partaker of morality—of a just and moral social and political life. For truth is the unity of the universal and subjective will; and the universal is to be found in the state, in its laws, its universal and rational arrangements. The state is the Divine Idea as it exists on earth. We have in it, therefore, the object of history in a more definite shape than before; that in which Freedom obtains objectivity, and lives in the enjoyment of this objectivity. For law is the objectivity of Spirit; volition in its true form. Only that will which obeys law is free; for it obeys itself—it is independent and so free. When the state or our country constitutes a community of existence; when the subjective will of man submits to laws—the contradiction between liberty and necessity vanishes. The rational has necessary existence, as being the reality and substance of things, and we are free in recognizing it as law, and following it as the substance of our own being. The objective and the subjective will are then reconciled, and present one identical homogeneous whole . . .

The development *in extenso* of the Idea of the state belongs to the philosophy of jurisprudence; but it must be observed that in the theories of our time various errors are current respecting it, which pass for established truths, and have become fixed prejudices. We will mention only a few of them, giving prominence to such as have a reference to the object of our history.

The error which first meets us is the direct contradictory of our principle that the state presents the realization of Freedom; the opinion, i.e. that man is free by nature, but that in society, in the state—to which nevertheless he is irresistibly impelled—he must limit this natural freedom . . . That assumption is one of those nebulous images which theory produces; an idea which it cannot avoid originating, but which it fathers upon real existence, without sufficient historical justification.

What we find in such a state of Nature to be in actual experience answers exactly to the idea of a *merely* natural condition. Freedom, as the ideal of that which is original and natural, does not exist as original and natural. Rather must it be first sought

out and won; and that by an incalculable medial discipline of the intellectual and moral powers. The state of Nature is, therefore, predominantly that of injustice and violence, of untamed natural impulses, of inhuman deeds and feelings. Limitation is certainly produced by society and the state, but it is a limitation of the mere brute emotions and rude instincts; as also, in a more advanced stage of culture, of the premeditated self-will of caprice and passion. This kind of constraint is part of the instrumentality by which only the consciousness of Freedom and the desire for its attainment, in its true—that is, rational and ideal form—can be obtained. To the ideal of Freedom, law and morality are indispensably requisite; and they are in and for themselves universal existences, objects and aims; which are discovered only by the activity of thought, separating itself from the merely sensuous, and developing itself, in opposition thereto; and which must, on the other hand, be introduced into and incorporated with the originally sensuous will, and that contrarily to its natural inclination. The perpetually recurring misapprehension of Freedom consists in regarding that term only in its formal, subjective sense, abstracted from its essential objects and aims; thus a constraint put upon impulse, desire, passion—pertaining to the particular individual as such—a limitation of caprice and self-will, is regarded as a fettering of Freedom. We should on the contrary look upon such limitation as the indispensable proviso of emancipation. Society and the state are the very conditions in which Freedom is realized. (38-41)

## *VII The Principle of Historical Development*

The mutations which history presents have been long characterized in the general, as an advance to something better, more perfect. The changes that take place in Nature—however infinitely manifold they may be—exhibit only a perpetually self-repeating cycle; in Nature there happens “nothing new under the sun,” and the multiform play of its phenomena so far induces a feeling of ennui; only in those changes which take place in the region of Spirit does anything new arise. This peculi-

arity in the world of mind has indicated in the case of man an altogether different destiny from that of merely natural objects—in which we find always one and the same stable character, to which all change reverts—namely, a real capacity for change, and that for the better—an impulse of perfectibility . . . The principle of perfectibility indeed is almost as indefinite a term as mutability in general; it is without scope or goal, and has no standard by which to estimate the changes in question: the improved, more perfect state of things towards which it professedly tends is altogether undetermined.

The principle of development involves also the existence of a latent germ of being—a capacity or potentiality striving to realize itself. This formal conception finds actual existence in Spirit; which has the history of the world for its theatre, its possession, and the sphere of its realization . . . That development (of natural organisms) takes place in a direct, unopposed, unhindered way. Between the Idea and its realization—the essential constitution of the original germ and the conformity to it of the existence derived from it—no disturbing influence can intrude. But in relation to Spirit it is quite otherwise. The realization of *its* Idea is mediated by consciousness and will; these very faculties are, in the first instance, sunk in their primary, *merely* natural life; the first object and goal of their striving is the realization of their *merely* natural destiny—but which, since it is Spirit that animates it, is possessed of vast attractions and displays great power and moral richness. Thus Spirit is at war with itself; it has to overcome itself as its most formidable obstacle. That development which in the sphere of Nature is a peaceful growth, is in that of Spirit, a severe, a mighty conflict with itself. What Spirit really strives for is the realization of its ideal being; but in doing so, it hides that goal from its own vision, and is proud and well satisfied in this alienation from it.

Its expansion, therefore, does not present the harmless tranquillity of mere growth, as does that of organic life, but a stern, reluctant working against itself. It exhibits, moreover, not the mere formal conception of development, but the attainment of a definite result. The goal of attainment we determined at the out-

set: it is Spirit in its *completeness*, in its essential nature, i.e. Freedom. This is the fundamental object, and therefore also the leading principle of the development—that whereby it receives meaning and importance (as in Roman history, Rome is the object—consequently that which directs our consideration of the facts related); as, conversely, the phenomena of the process have resulted from this principle alone, and only as referred to it, possess a sense of value. There are many considerable periods in history in which this development seems to have been intermitted; in which we might rather say, the whole enormous gain of previous culture appears to have been entirely lost; after which, unhappily, a new beginning has been necessary, made in the hope of recovering—by the assistance of some remains saved from the wreck of a former civilization. We behold also continued processes of growth; structures and systems of culture in particular spheres, rich in kind, and well-developed in every direction. The merely formal and indeterminate view of development in general can neither assign to one form of expansion superiority over the other, nor render comprehensible the object of that decay of older periods of growth; but must regard such occurrences—or, to speak more particularly, the retrocessions they exhibit—as external contingencies, and can only judge of particular modes of development from indeterminate points of view; which, since the development, as such, is all in all—are relative and not absolute goals of attainment.

Universal history exhibits the gradation in the development of that principle whose substantial purport is the consciousness of Freedom. The analysis of the successive grades, in their abstract form, belongs to logic; in their concrete aspect to the philosophy of Spirit. Here it is sufficient to state that the first step in the process present that immersion of Spirit in Nature which has already been referred to; the second shows it as advancing to the consciousness of its Freedom. But this initial separation from Nature is imperfect and partial, since it is derived immediately from the merely natural state, is consequently related to it, and is still encumbered with it as an essentially connected element. The third step is the elevation of the soul from this still limited and



special form of Freedom to its pure universal form; that state in which the spiritual essence attains the consciousness and feeling of itself. These grades are the ground-principles of the general process; but how each of them on the other hand involves within *itself* a process of formation—constituting the links in a dialectic of transition—to particularize this must be reserved for the sequel.

Here we have only to indicate that Spirit begins with a germ of infinite possibility, but *only* possibility—containing its substantial existence in an undeveloped form, as the object and goal which it reaches only in its resultant—full reality. In actual existence Progress appears as an advancing from the imperfect to the more perfect; but the former must not be understood abstractly as *only* the imperfect, but as something which involves the very opposite of itself—the so-called perfect—as a germ or impulse. So—reflectively, at least—possibility points to something destined to become actual; the Aristotelian *dynamis* is also *potentia*, power and might. Thus the imperfect, as involving its opposite, is a contradiction, which certainly exists, but which is continually annulled and solved; the instinctive movement—the inherent impulse in the life of the soul—to break through the rind of mere nature, sensuousness, and that which is alien to it, and to attain to the light of consciousness, i.e. to itself. (54-57)

### VIII    *The State and Spirit*

In our language the term *History* (*geschichte—geschehen*) unites the objective with the subjective side, and denotes quite as much the *historia rerum gestarum* as the *res gestae* themselves; on the other hand it comprehends not less what has happened, than the narration of what has happened. This union of the two meanings we must regard as of a higher order than mere outward accident; we must suppose historical narrations to have appeared contemporaneously with historical deeds and events. It is an internal vital principle common to both that produces them synchronously. Family memorials, patriarchal traditions, have an interest confined to the family and the clan . . .

But it is the state which first presents subject-matter that is not only adapted to the prose of history, but involves the production of such history in the very progress of its own being. Instead of merely subjective mandates on the part of government—sufficing for the needs of the moment—a community that is acquiring a stable existence, and exalting itself into a state, requires formal commands and laws—comprehensive and universally binding prescriptions; and thus produces a record as well as an interest concerned with intelligent, definite—and, in their results—lasting transactions and occurrences . . .

The periods—whether we suppose them to be centuries or millennia—that were passed by nations before history was written among them—and which may have been filled with revolutions, nomadic wanderings, and the strangest mutations—are on that very account destitute of objective history, because they present no subjective history, no annals. We need not suppose that the records of such periods have accidentally perished; rather, because they were not possible, do we find them wanting. Only in a state cognizant of laws can distinct transactions take place, accompanied by such a clear consciousness of them as supplies the ability and suggests the necessity of an enduring record. (60-61)

\* \* \*

Universal history—as already demonstrated—shows the development of the consciousness of Freedom on the part of Spirit, and of the consequent realization of that Freedom. This development implies a gradation—a series of increasingly adequate expressions or manifestations of Freedom, which result from its Idea. The logical, and—as still more prominent—the dialectical nature of the Idea in general, i.e. that it is self-determined—that it assumes successive forms which it successively transcends; and by this very process of transcending its earlier stages, gains and affirmative, and in fact, a richer and more concrete shape;—this necessity of its nature, and the necessary series of pure abstract forms which the Idea successively assumes—is exhibited in the department of logic. Here we need adopt only one of its results, i.e. that every step in the process, as differing from any other,

has its determinate peculiar principle. In history this principle is idiosyncrasy of Spirit—peculiar national genius. (63-64)

\* \* \*

The history of the world occupies a higher ground than that on which morality has properly its position; which is personal character—the conscience of individuals—their particular will and mode of actions; those have a value, imputation, reward or punishment proper to themselves. What the absolute aim of Spirit requires and accomplishes—what Providence does—transcends the obligations, and the liability to imputation and the description of good and bad motives, which attach to individuality in virtue of its social relations. They who on moral grounds, and consequently with noble intention, have resisted that which the advance of the spiritual Idea makes necessary, stand higher in moral worth than those whose crimes have been turned into the means—under the direction of a superior principle—of realizing the purposes of that principle. But in such revolutions both parties generally stand within the limits of the same circle of transient and corruptible existence . . . The deeds of great men, who are the individuals of the world's history, thus appear not only justified in view of that intrinsic result of which they were not conscious, but also from the point of view occupied by the secular moralist. But looked at from this point, moral claims that are irrelevant must not be brought into collision with world-historical deeds and their accomplishment. (66-67)

\* \* \*

It is the concrete spirit of a people which we have distinctly to recognize, and since it is Spirit, it can only be comprehended spiritually, that is, by thought. It is this alone which takes the lead in all the deeds and tendencies of that people, and which is occupied in realizing itself—in satisfying its ideal and becoming self-conscious—for its great business is self-production. But for spirit, the highest attainment is self-knowledge; an advance not only to the intuition, but to the thought—the clear conception of itself. This it must and is also destined to accomplish; but

the accomplishment is at the same time its dissolution, and the rise of another spirit, another world-historical people, another epoch of universal history. This transition and connection lead us to the connection of the whole—the idea of the world's history as such—which we have now to consider more closely, and of which we have to give representation. (71-72)

## *IX Death and Life*

History in general is therefore the development of Spirit in time, as Nature is the development of the Idea in space. If then we cast a glance over the world's history generally, we see a vast picture of changes and transactions; of infinitely manifold forms of peoples, states, individuals, in unresting succession. Everything that can enter into and interest the soul of man—all our sensibility to goodness, beauty, and greatness—is called into play. On every hand aims are adopted and pursued, which we recognize, whose accomplishment we desire—we hope and fear for them. In all these occurrences and changes we behold human action and suffering predominant; everywhere something akin to ourselves, and therefore everywhere something that excites our interest for or against . . .

The general thought—the category which first presents itself in this restless mutation of individuals and peoples, existing for a time and then vanishing—is that of change at large. The sight of the ruins of some ancient sovereignty directly leads us to contemplate this thought of change in its negative aspect. What traveller among the ruins of Carthage, of Palmyra, Persepolis, or Rome, has not been stimulated to reflections on the transiency of kingdoms and men, and to sadness at the thought of a vigorous and rich life now departed—a sadness which does not expend itself on personal losses and the uncertainty of one's own undertakings, but is a disinterested sorrow at the decay of a splendid and highly cultured national life! But the next consideration which allies itself with that of change, is that change, while it means dissolution, involves at the same time the rise of a new life—that while death is the issue of life, life is also the issue of



death. This is a great conception; one which the Oriental thinkers attained, and which is perhaps the highest in their metaphysics. In the idea of metempsychosis we find it evolved in its relation to individual existence; but a myth more generally known is that of the Phoenix as a type of the life of Nature; eternally preparing for itself its funeral pile, and consuming itself upon it; but so that from its ashes is produced the new, renovated, fresh life. But this image is only Asiatic; Oriental, not Occidental. Spirit—consuming the envelope of its existence—does not merely pass into another envelope, nor rise rejuvenescent from the ashes of its previous form; it comes forth exalted, glorified, a purer spirit. It certainly makes war upon itself—consumes its own existence; but in this very destruction it works up that existence into a new form, and each successive phase becomes in its turn a material, working on which it exalts itself to a new grade.

If we consider Spirit in this aspect—regarding its changes not merely as rejuvenescent transitions, i.e. returns to the same form, but rather as manipulations of itself, by which it multiplies the material for future endeavors—we see it exerting itself in a variety of modes and directions; developing its powers and gratifying its desires in a variety which is inexhaustible, because every one of its creations, in which it has already found gratification, meets it anew as material, and is a new stimulus to plastic activity. The abstract conception of mere change gives place to the thought of Spirit manifesting, developing and perfecting its powers in every direction which its manifold nature can follow. What powers it inherently possesses we learn from the variety of products and formations which it originates. In this pleasurable activity, it has to do only with itself. As involved with the conditions of mere nature—internal and external—it will indeed meet in these not only opposition and hindrance, but will often see its endeavors thereby fail; often sink under the complication in which it is entangled either by Nature or by itself. But in such case it perishes in fulfilling its own destiny and proper function, and even thus exhibits the spectacle of self-demonstration as spiritual activity.

The very essence of Spirit is activity; it realizes its potentiality

—makes itself its own deed, its own work—and thus it becomes an object to itself; contemplates itself as an objective existence. Thus is it with the Spirit of a people: it is a Spirit having strictly defined characteristics, which erects itself into an objective world, that exists and persists in a particular religious form of worship, customs, constitution, and political laws—in the whole complex of its institutions—in the events and transactions that make up its history. That is its work—that is what this particular nation is. Nations are what their deeds are . . . The relation of the individual to that Spirit is that he appropriates to himself this substantial existence; that it becomes his character and capability, enabling him to have a definite place in the world—to be *something*. For he finds the being of the people to which he belongs an already established, firm world—objectively present to him—with which he has to incorporate himself. In this its work, therefore—its world—the Spirit of the people enjoys its existence and finds its satisfaction. A nation is moral—virtuous—vigorous—while it is engaged in realizing its grand objects, and defends its work against external violence during the process of giving to its purposes an objective existence. The contradiction between its potential, subjective being—its inner aim and life—and its actual being is removed; it has attained full reality, has itself objectively present to it. But this having been attained, the activity displayed by the Spirit of the people in question is no longer needed; it has its desire. The nation can still accomplish much in war and peace at home and abroad; but the living, substantial soul itself may be said to have ceased its activity. The essential, supreme interest has consequently vanished from its life, for interest is present only where there is opposition. The nation lives the same kind of life as the individual when passing from maturity to old age—in the enjoyment of itself—in the satisfaction of being exactly what it desired and was able to attain . . . This mere customary life (the watch wound up and going by itself) is what brings on natural death. Custom is activity without opposition, for which there remains only a formal duration in which the fullness and zest that originally characterized the aim of life are out of the question—a merely external, sensuous existence which

has ceased to throw itself enthusiastically into its object. Thus perish individuals, thus perish peoples by a natural death; and though the latter may continue in being, it is an existence without intellect or vitality; having no need of its institutions, because the need for them is satisfied—a political nullity and tedium. In order that a truly universal interest may arise, the Spirit of a people must advance to the adoption of some new purpose; but whence can this new purpose originate? It would be a higher, more comprehensive conception of itself—a transcending of its principle—but this very act would involve a principle of a new order, a new national Spirit.

Such a new principle does in fact enter into the Spirit of a people that has arrived at full development and self-realization; it dies not a simply natural death—for it is not a mere single individual, but a spiritual, generic life; in its case natural death appears to imply destruction through its own agency. The reason of this difference from the single natural individual is that the Spirit of a people exists as a genus, and consequently carries within it its own negation, in the very generality which characterizes it. A people can only die a violent death when it has become naturally dead in itself, as, e.g. The German Imperial Cities, the German Imperial Constitution.

It is not of the nature of the all-pervading Spirit to die this merely natural death; it does not simply sink into the senile life of mere custom, but—as being a national Spirit belonging to universal history—attains to the consciousness of what its work is; it attains to a conception of itself. In fact it is world-historical only insofar as a universal principle has lain in its fundamental element—in its grand aim: only so far is the work which such a spirit produces, a moral, political organization. If it be mere desires that impel nations to activity, such deeds pass over without leaving a trace; or their traces are only ruin and destruction . . .

The highest point in the development of a people is this—to have gained a conception of its life and condition—to have reduced its laws, its ideas of justice and morality to a science; for in this unity of the objective and subjective lies the most

intimate unity that Spirit can attain to in and with itself. In its work it is employed in rendering itself an object of its own contemplation; but it cannot develop itself objectively in its essential nature, except in *thinking* itself.

At this point, then, Spirit is acquainted with its principles—the general character of its acts. But at the same time, in virtue of its very generality, this work of thought is different in point of form from the actual achievements of the national genius, and from the vital agency by which those achievements have been performed. We have then before us a real and an ideal existence of the Spirit of the nation. If we wish to gain the general idea and conception of what the Greeks were, we find it in Sophocles and Aristophanes, in Thucydides and Plato. In these individuals the Greek spirit conceived and thought itself. (72-76)

\* \* \*

The result of this process is then that Spirit, in rendering itself objective and making this its being an object of thought, on the one hand destroys the determinate form of its being and on the other hand gains a comprehension of the universal element which it involves, and thereby gives a new form to its inherent principle. In virtue of this, the substantial character of the national Spirit has been altered—that is, its principle has risen into another, and in fact a higher principle.

It is of the highest importance in apprehending and comprehending history to have and to understand the thought involved in this transition. The individual traverses as a unity various grades of development, and remains the same individual; in like manner also does a people, till the Spirit which it embodies reaches the grade of universality. In this point lies the fundamental, the ideal necessity of transition. This is the soul—the essential consideration—of the philosophical comprehension of history.

Spirit is essentially the result of its own activity. Its activity is the transcending of immediate, simple, unreflected existence—the negation of that existence, and the returning into itself. We may compare it with the seed: for with this the plant begins, yet



it is also the result of the plant's entire life. But the weak side of life is exhibited in the fact that the commencement and the result are disjoined from each other. Thus also is it in the life of individuals and peoples. The life of a people ripens a certain fruit; its activity aims at the complete manifestation of the principle which it embodies. But this fruit does not fall back into the bosom of the people that produced and matured it; on the contrary, it becomes a poison-draught to it. That poison-draught it cannot let alone, for it has an insatiable thirst for it: the taste of the draught is its annihilation, though at the same time the raise of a new principle.

We have already discussed the final aim of this progression. The principles of the successive phases of Spirit that animate the nations in a necessitated gradation are themselves only steps in the development of the one universal Spirit, which through them elevates and completes itself to a self-comprehending totality.

While we are thus concerned exclusively with the Idea of Spirit, and in the history of the world regard everything as only its manifestation, we have, in traversing the past—however extensive its periods—only to do with what is present; for philosophy, as occupying itself with the True, has to do with the eternally present. Nothing in the past is lost for it, for the Idea is ever present; Spirit is immortal; with it there is no past, no future, but an essential *now*. This necessarily implies that the present form of Spirit comprehends within it all earlier steps. These have indeed unfolded themselves in succession independently; but what Spirit is it has always been essentially; distinctions are only the development of this essential nature. The life of the ever-present Spirit is a circle of progressive embodiments, which looked at in one aspect still exist beside each other, and only as looked at from another point of view appear as past. The grades which Spirit seems to have left behind it, it still possesses in the depths of its present. (78-79)

## *Suggestions for Further Reading*

The following is in no way intended to be a complete list of the material available on the authors included in the readings. Periodical articles and foreign-language books have been omitted, simply because their inclusion would have increased the list beyond all reasonable size for a brief book.

There are only three books of readings in philosophy of history: F. Stern, *The Varieties of History* (1957), H. Meyerhoff, *The Philosophy of History in Our Time* (1959) and P. Gardiner, *Theories of History* (1959). Stern, whose emphasis is more on historiography than on philosophy of history, begins with Voltaire. Gardiner, who is a philosopher, begins with Vico. Meyerhoff's selections are mostly contemporary. All three have excellent introductions.

Three good introductory books to the field are W. H. Walsh, *An Introduction to Philosophy of History* (1951), R. G. Collingwood, *The Idea of History* (1949), and K. Löwith, *The Meaning of History* (1949). Walsh, a philosopher, analyzes concepts, particularly "speculative" and "critical." Collingwood is a historian who turned philosopher; his book is the best history of philosophy of history in English,

although it is a defense of one particular theory of history (Idealism). Löwith's book is a series of individual essays, written more from a theological than from a philosophical or historiographical point of view. All three are available in paperback editions.

J. W. Thompson's *A History of Historical Writing* (2 vols., 1942) deals with historiography, but contains many comments (not always accurate) on the philosophers of history included here. R. Flint, *History of the Philosophy of History* (1893) is elderly and incomplete but has much material on the period I have covered. In addition, almost all the volumes from which the readings were taken have good introductions.

*The Greeks:* There is a wealth of material on these classical works, but it is very unevenly distributed. The best general books are A. W. Gomme, *The Greek Attitude to Poetry and History* (1954), Moses Hadas, *A History of Greek Literature* (1950), J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (1909) and the chapters on Herodotus, Thucydides and Polybius in the *Cambridge Ancient History*. On Thucydides the best books are F. M. Cornford, *Thucydides Mythistoricus* (1907), C. N. Cochrane, *Thucydides and the Science of History* (1929), J. H. Finley, Jr., *Thucydides* (1942) and G. B. Grundy, *Thucydides and the History of His Age* (2nd ed., 1948). For Plato's theory, see Jowett's introduction to *The Statesman* (vol. III of the *Works*, 1871), and for Polybius, F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius*, introduction to vol. I (1957). For the Hellenistic period C. Welles' chapter in R. Dentan, *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (1955) is good. On Agathias there are references, though not very complete ones, in C. Diehl, *Byzantium: Greatness and Decline* (1957), A. Vasiliev, *History of the Byzantine Empire* (1952) and J. B. Bury, *History of the Later Roman Empire* (2 vols., 2nd ed., 1911).

*The Bible:* While the amount of material available on the Bible is formidable, that on the Biblical attitude to history is not. Standard books which refer to one aspect or another of the subject are E. Mould, *Essentials of Bible History* (1951), G. F. Moore, *Literature of the Old Testament* (1911), S. R. Driver, *An Introduction to the Literature of the Old Testament* (1913), J. A. Bewer, *The Literature of the Old Testament in Its Historical Development* (1922) and E. Scott, *The Literature of the New Testament* (1943). The books I found most stimulating were W. F. Albright, *From the Stone Age to Christianity* (1957), R. Dentan, *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (1955), H. G. Wood et al., *The Kingdom of God and History* (1958), C. R. North, *The Old Testament Interpretation of History* (1946) and O. Cullmann, *Christ and Time* (trans. F. V. Filson, 1950).

*St. Augustine*: There is considerably less disproportion in the comparison of the total material available on Augustine and the part of it that discusses his attitude to history than is the case with the Bible. Two good general books on the background are R. Shinn, *Christianity and the Problem of History* (1953) and R. Milburn, *Early Christian Interpretations of History* (1954). On Augustine himself, I found these books useful in the following order: E. Gilson, *The Christian Philosophy of St. Augustine* (1960), J. N. Figgis, *Political Aspects of St. Augustine's City of God* (1921), M. Versfeld, *A Guide to the "City of God"* (1958), R. Battenhouse, ed., *A Companion to the Study of St. Augustine* (1955) and M. d'Arcy, *A Monument to the Study of St. Augustine* (1930), especially the chapter by C. Dawson.

*Bodin*: Most of the material available on Bodin is in French, and what is in English, apart from periodical articles is not primarily concerned with his historical theory. J. W. Allen, *A History of Political Thought in the 16th Century* (1960) and two of F. J. C. Hearnshaw's *Social and Political Ideas* volumes (those dealing with the Renaissance and Reformation, and with the 16th and 17th centuries) contain some material. The only book in English that discusses *The Method* at length is J. L. Brown, *The Methodus . . . of Jean Bodin: A Critical Study* (1939).

*Vico*: In addition to Vico's *New Science*, his *Autobiography* has been translated, with an excellent introduction, by M. H. Fisch and Bergin (1944). F. Copleston's *History of Philosophy*, vol. VI (1960) has a fine discussion of Vico. Benedetto Croce's *The Philosophy of Giambattista Vico* (trans. R. G. Collingwood, 1913) is, as is usual with Croce, difficult and obscure. The best general books are A. Caponigri, *Time and Idea: Vico's Theology of History* (1953), T. Berry, *The Historical Theory of Giambattista Vico* (1949), H. P. Adams, *The Life and Writings of Giambattista Vico* (1935) and R. Flint, *Vico* (1884). P. Hazard, *The European Mind, 1680-1715* (1953) has some stimulating material.

*Herder*: There are three good biographies of Herder in English: R. Clark, *Herder: His Life and Thought* (1955), A. Gillies, *Herder* (1945), and F. McEachran, *The Life and Philosophy of Johann Gottfried Herder* (1939). R. Ergang's *Herder and the Foundations of German Nationalism* (1931) is a fine specialized study. There is an excellent essay on Herder's philosophy of history in A. Lovejoy, *Essays in the History of Ideas* (1955), and another in Karl Barth's *Protestant Thought from Rousseau to Ritschl* (1959).



*Hegel*: In addition to Hegel's *Philosophy of History*, T. Knox's edition of his *Philosophy of Right* contains many useful ideas for interpreting his thought about history, for which some knowledge of his other work is essential. An easily available edition of Kant's *Idea for a Universal History with Cosmopolitan Intent* is in C. J. Friedrich, ed., *The Philosophy of Kant* (1949). Three very good books on Hegel's thought in general are W. Stace, *The Philosophy of Hegel* (1955), J. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (1958) and G. Mure, *An Introduction to Hegel* (1940). None of these stress his historical thinking. B. Croce, *What is Living and What is Dead in the Philosophy of Hegel* (trans. D. Ainslie, 1915) does not oversimplify any of the problems. On the relation between his political and historical thought there are good essays in G. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory* (1950) and E. Cassirer, *The Myth of the State* (1955). C. J. Friedrich's introduction to his *The Philosophy of Hegel*, a book of selections (1959), has also good comments on several aspects of his thought. G. Morris' *Hegel's Philosophy of the State and of History* (1887) is very dated, but has much good material all the same. The best single book on Hegel's philosophy of history in general I found to be H. Marcuse, *Reason and Revolution: Hegel and the Rise of Social Theory* (2nd ed., 1954).

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